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**THE DARK MOTHER**



*BOOKS BY WALDO FRANK*

THE UNWELCOME MAN

THE DARK MOTHER

THE ART OF THE VIEUX COLOMBIER

OUR AMERICA



# THE DARK MOTHER

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*A NOVEL*

BY  
WALDO FRANK

*She is Flesh moving through Flesh  
She is Spirit*

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# THE DARK MOTHER

## I

**T**HE air moved toward the mountain: the waves and the trees and the earth moved toward the mountain. All the world moved gently upward toward the mountain like a Tide. The mountain moved downward toward earth, spilled water and spread trees in it.

A full-grown boy sat low in a canoe with his hands in the sharp water, and let it drift with the wind. The wind ceased: the wavelets stopped marching up the backs of his hands, there was silence. The boy lay back in his craft that lay in the water, sleepily and tamed by the wind's absence. His mind drowsed but in its sleep walked forth. The mountain became a mood of contemplation. A cloud rose over the mountain faster than the moon. There was to be no moon.

Away on all sides of the lake woods murmured. The lake was silence in wide swaying murmur. The woods rolled purple and tumbled black: they mounted atop each other to stark eminence against the sky: they huddled downward into breathing valleys and the suspense of meadows lying with wide eyes. The woods were shredded by noisy rivers: they stumbled over rocks, fell away.

The sky dipped and the earth found it: the sky too leaped. Leaping away it took the landside with it. All that was left of trees and water and wide-eyed fields was haze, like a long-ing vision.

Within this lay the boy who was nearly a man. He was the tiny thrust of a flaming outer world on the lake's hard luster. He was immersed in depths that made him see new stars.

He lifted himself and began to paddle. He paddled with clear brow against night.

The canoe lurched and veered. The water swirled. A distant bird fluttered from bracken. A pad of lilies went cutting in his path; a branch broke off. A bat whizzed in the dark above his eyes. . . . His mind awaked in the disparate turbulence. It had gone forth asleep to the world. It returned awake to its little human chamber. He saw near things.

His canoe was still. His eyes shot on. A grove of trees was sheer against the sky and his eyes. . . . Through the calm passion of the summer lake with its clinging marges, through the cool strong lake tossing its mystery in waves upon the shore that loved it, a grove of trees was sheer against the sky and his eyes. A grove of trees was a crown on the sharp brow of earth. A grove of trees was black with a great depth.

Their great black depth was a mouth: a silent mouth full of sound. They stood there still above the lake and moved into his mood. They sucked him.

He found he thought of them as one. He found he had long been still in his canoe, measuring himself against them.

There was within them something hidden that sent him forward; something hidden that drove him off. He was balanced.

The lake was light and cool and open. In the trees was great heat, great closeness. The boy who was nearly a man felt he was naked and that the trees would clothe him: he had delight of his nakedness as if he had thrown off some bondage.

He looked about him, and the trees were in his eyes: wherever he looked they were, like a love that a man carried with him. He saw the mountain loom, the dense cloud over

the world: he felt how strange was this lake on which he was uplifted into a naked world. He let his eyes fall back to the trees—his body all that time had fronted them—and understood how it would be a terrible joy to be consumed by them.

The trees swayed. They were arms with eloquent sad hands.

He struck the water with his paddle. His canoe came alive. He was going to plunge into the trees. . . .

A part of him laughed for they were only trees.

The trees began to cut off his sense of the sky. They breathed deep . . . no part of him laughed. He glided. The trees opened their arms. Leaves trembled and danced faintly. The world of sky swooned out: the world of black trees swept his being.

The water that bore him whispered in language of the trees. It was not of the lake. His canoe grated against a log, it nudged into a mound of moss. It shivered back, it stopped. A slow dark singing. . . .

The boy drew his shoulders close and was afraid, and was afraid even to breathe, for what was he breathing? He was fast inclosed in a throbbing praying Thing.

His breath beat against his eyes. He drove his eyes to look into the trees. He saw chestnut-oak, basswood, willow. A circlet of stone tinkled in the pool of a log. Trees knotted over the earth, gnarled upward toward light. Young birch were a white chatter leading into the silence of forest. He saw trees. He saw through trees. He saw black trees flooded like sunny windows with a world beyond and within them. . . . He saw what stiffened him, stopped his blood. A face. The face of a life. He saw the white face of a man. . . .

Chairs were thick on the porch: thicker still was the talking. David alone was silent. He was the sole ear in a close texture of words. And it was raining. The guests at *The Villa* were profuse in lamentation of the weather. "What a day!" "Won't

it ever stop?" they said. They were insincere. They were glad of the rain. It held them close together on the porch where they could talk, where there was much warm human flesh to talk to. David did not need to listen. He sat very still and looked beyond the porch. *The Villa* stood on the brow of a hill above the lake. His eyes fell down a flaunting cornpatch; the carriage road dawdled within low shrubs and the lake cut out, lead-blue and harried by the rain. The trees were gray with the rain, the tall grasses of August gleamed with it and swayed. David saw it sweep, like a phalanx, over the water. His senses dozed in the rain and the voices. The harsh note of a chair creaking was a rare break in cadence. Over the eaves of the porch, the drops gathered and broke in a quick flurry; there was a pause while the drops held, swelled, burst again. He saw beyond the two great elms flanking the house how the clouds were a veering maze of mist, how the lighter gray swerved down from the dank mass and filmed in shivering water toward the lake. He saw in the pent gray faces of his neighbors how the words gathered and broke forth.

This passion of talk was a new element to David. He sensed its kinship with the play of the clouds which he knew. His mother had been silent. In Mr. Devitt's shop where he worked, the boys spoke when there was need. He had heard girls chatter chiefly from a distance. He dwelt on two planes. Part of him moved beyond the hotel porch. It shared the drowse of nature, it was drenched in the warm rain. The trees were subdued and satisfied. They were like women after words of love, they were like women glowing while love worked on them. The ground was still. When the sun came the ground of the woods rang with life. Now there was quiet. David thought of this: how the earth watched the trees, was slumberous and drank its potion. This was the forward part

of David. In the back of his mind was the porch and the parlor where the children had been banished.

Each of these human beings seemed to have a passion: it was the burden of all their words. They could talk nothing else. They could partake of nothing foreign to their passion. If they could have changed their pasts, they might have spoken a different thing. David, relaxed in the play of words and rain, saw how the faces of these men and women were stamps of life: how life had branded each as with a burning iron.

He thought of his mother. Did she have a mark and a passion also? David was out of the group on the porch. Its passionate tourneys of talk were far away and yet their character was sharp. When he awoke in the morning in the room that had always been his—he would never see it again—he sat up in his bed, he looked about at the strange salience of familiar objects. The yellow oak bureau, the picture of Washington crossing the Delaware, his own black boots, his own gray cap stood forth with an uncanny clearness as if he had come from a two-dimensioned world. This feeling passed. Now here it was again, as he listened to words. He had it watching away at the drenched woods and the lake. His neighbors, tense in their chairs, took on the conciseness of automata. He felt them pour into words, he felt the unease of their restraint when they were interrupted, forced to listen to another, he felt how they crouched in these forced silences and hurled themselves back into speech at the first hint of pause. In silence they lay flopping like fishes out of water. Words were their element. . . . And David saw the breathing of the woods, the warm comfort of trees that had grown up together and knew their silences. They were clothed in a sweet sanctity of resolve and repose. They took the rain with faint bowed heads. They were alive, in David, and very thoughtful. For suddenly they too were remote. They too had the sharpness of the completely strange.

David had slipped from the reality of men and nature. He thought of his mother. All life about him was marvelous and clear like the objects in his old room—he would never see it again—when he saw them with eyes still full of his night's dream.

She had died that May. Until a few years ago she had talked a great deal with him. Their talk dwindled. The open space of their few words became an easeful place for him to lie in. He withdrew more and more to it. She died almost silent.

They lived together in the white house where he remembered his father. His father left his violin, left always David's picture of him. A heavy and loose man, ashift in his clothes, with long dead hands that came alive, at times, playing giges. Then his feet danced along and his mother's eyes were rigid. David played his violin when it was all of him left. He looked at his hands and began to play out of tune. His mother had no ear for that. She said: "Why do ye stop, dear?" "Mother," he said, "aren't my hands fat and childish?"

His father died ten years before. He remembered storms of temper and showers of affection: he remembered pourings of words. He could catch no memory of his mother's words woven into his father's. His father's voice and his mother's seemed separate always. He wondered what this meant. They had lived in Boston, his father had been well on his way to fame. There he was born. They left and their leaving was woven into the contrast of his father's humors and wild words, his mother's rigid eyes. Adolph Markand had stopped performing with his violin. He became a teacher. Little girls and young women rang the bell and were secreted with him in the parlor. Sometimes no music came through the hour. His mother grew nervous in the kitchen. She dropped a dish. She said: "David, go into the parlor and fetch my sewing." He

stepped to the door. "Wait," she called. "Don't bother, dear. . . ." In a rasping voice: "Why don't you go out in the garden and play?"

His father died. A mighty man who was an uncle came up to them from New York; Anthony Deane, a man within a white waistcoat, under a stove-pipe hat, a man who was his mother's brother. He said to David with a god-like unction: "You and Mamma will stay on at the house, never fear, my lad." He patted his cheek with two round ringed fingers.

The funeral was a mellow flat in his mind; one moment, like a hill that stood sheer above the field where he lounged on Sundays, marked it forever. His mother was dry-eyed and so was his uncle. They were busy and pious, they did not weep. Yet his mother was sad. He was sure of that. He felt a terror in her lack of tears—a portentous suffering beyond the relief of his own. They stood over the grave and the body went down. He could not keep his eyes from his mother. He said to himself: "Look at that box, that's father; that's the last time you will see him." It was no help. His mother was beautiful and tall, her black dress was a delight. He loved her black dress that showed off so well the soft white hands, the pale smooth cheek, the warm heaving of her bosom! Her eyes were large brown eyes and they were dry and there was sun in them: she did not fend them. Her eyes looked at the coffin of her husband, rigidly as if he were dancing instead of still and hidden in a box. Then they turned away: his mother looked at the girl who stood across from her, near David. A soft round girl named Letty who had red eyes now and was his father's pupil. The deep commotion of his mother's breast was gone: she threw forth her hands, palms outward as if there was some one against her. Tears came. His mother sobbed and covered her face, she almost feil. His uncle led her away. She wept a long time.



The next morning, again, her eyes were dry and her breast that he so loved again moved deeply.

That was many years ago when he was ten, and he had lived close and alone with her for ten more years. His mother did not breath at peace, like other women—like other people. David's mind flew to another happening and stayed there. . . .

A girl came in with her machine, it was the first year he worked in Mr. Devitt's blycycle shop, now he remembered. He must have been fifteen. He was already tall, the full golden down on his cheeks and lips disturbed and inspired him. It was a splendid brand-new *Eagle* with one of those coaster-brakes that seemed a miracle even after he had learned to put them on, take them apart. Mr. Devitt and Joe were in the shop, but she stayed there in the door, balancing a moment, and came to him straight. The front tire was punctured. "This won't take but five minutes," he said. "You'll wait, won't you?" No one in the shop noticed how she stood there before him, with her feet slightly apart and firm, and in some way made him look at her—as he had never cared to look at a girl. His heart beat fast: he saw her. She had a soft throat, she had bright hair, her body was slender music. She said: "I'm in a hurry: couldn't you bring it to me? My name is Miss Marshall. You know—Elm Street." It was near the time for going home. He thought that he did not wish to take it, but it was near the time for going home and he could not say no. He went. She came slowly to meet him: she took the wheel from him very fast and leaned it against the tall grape arbor. She paid him his money. He moved away; she looked at him; and her eyes held him. He stood there fixed; her eyes went up and down the arbor and the garden. Up and about went her eyes and their meaning was clear: they could not be seen. She stepped close. She placed her hands on his shoulders, her eyes were now under his. David looked down from her eyes to her soft still bare throat—to

her body. He could see her little breasts like apples within her blouse. He saw that they were quiet. They were round and hard and quiet. A strange will crept over David: that they should be soft and heaving. For this reason his arms went over her, he kissed her mouth.

He held her at his arm's length. Her face was white. There was mist over her look at him. Her breasts moved! Deep, hard she breathed and her breasts moved! He was afraid. He wanted to get away. He was a little sick with what he had done. He left her. He did not kiss her again. . . .

The guests raced, the woods brooded, near David sitting with his past. The rain let up.

Trees rose higher and more sheer, they were black in the sky. A faint wave of air came upon the grasses: they were a film of green and yellow and purple over the ground. The grasses flowed into the air where the heavy rain had been. David saw how the sky changed. It was farther away and solid, no longer shredding in mist.

Nature was near to him once more. The talk was near and spreading. He began to understand the words that went endlessly on. It was like being in the rain, face up, where he could see the separate drops strike him, and the full sweep of the rain was lost.

He was afraid of these pouring men and women. He was afraid they would ask him to join in their words. What would he say? He had no theme and no passion. "I guess I am pretty stupid." He was relieved, confessing this to himself. He was soft and vague; he did not seem to mind. Almost he seemed glad. Something made him know in these sharp stamps of life the consequence of hardenings and exclusions.

What was it he had felt in the fields near his town when he lazed? He had felt a great and moving Breath. He had felt himself astir upon a Breath, as he saw a hair on his

chest lift when he breathed. Life? It had no center, no form, no way. It was a breathing rondure that fed him.

Below on the road and below the corn came a man. His head and shoulders were slight, moving up.

The eyes of David were veiled. His thoughts were color. He felt no form to his thoughts, no form to himself. He sat in a water of slow colors. He sat as if he lay. He was quiet, enfolded. These waters that held him were a tide. They were moveless and yet they were pointing. They seemed to be going somewhere and to have come from somewhere and to be going whence they had come. David said to himself:

"How funny! I've forgotten all about last night. That is funny!"

He thought of last night. . . . Brief strained words within the trees with a strange sharp man. Angular words—and their canoes rippling smoothly out, side by side. Undimensioned like a dream's end, yet sharp, was their emerging from the trees. The lake was suddenly solid, mounting toward its end where the village burned a patch in the night—they paddling together toward it. . . . A different world; an adventure. Yet he knew that the colors which were his thoughts and in which he had lain had not changed.

The man on the road was near. He saw the man of last night.

All new and the same: a man cutting upon him through that night, these guests, these clouds. "Rain's stopped. Time for a walk."

A boy, nineteen and tall, with loose light hair and features warm against the gray of the day—a young man, older by some years, quick-gaited, short—followed the road that followed the shore of the lake.

They were silent. David clutched a strand of grass and put it in his mouth.

"My name is Rennard—Thomas Rennard," he heard.

"Mine is David Markand."

"I come from New York. . . . Are you going to New York?"

"Yes." David wanted to say: "How did you know?"

"We hadn't much to say—last night—to each other, did we?" Thomas Rennard laughed. They looked at each other.

"Have you ever been to New York?"

"No. . . . I have an uncle there."

"You're going to work for him?"

How did he know these things? "Yes."

"A bit of a loaf before you buckle down?"

"He has a big tobacco business," said David. If he did not wonder, if he took this walk as the natural pleasant stretching of his legs, he was at ease.

"Suppose you don't like it?"

David was silent.

"Suppose you don't like it—will you quit?"

"Why—I guess so!" It had never occurred to David. Life was life. One did not question if one liked it. The air where one was one breathed.

"Be sure of that!" Tom Rennard's words came warm. "That is important. Hold on to your right to *choose*. Hold on to your right *not* to choose. . . . I never really had that right."

David was silent again. He walked with a man, he walked with a world he had no sense of. But his legs went easy.

"I'm a lawyer," said Tom Rennard.

"Didn't you choose *that*?"

"No . . . I thought I had. I dreamed of being a lawyer. I fooled myself."

"What did you want to be?"

"I don't know that either."

He said "either." Why did he say "either"? It was true:

What did he know? David spoke with an elation like a release.

"I don't know, either. Really I don't. You see—Uncle—Mr. Deane—he came up when mother died. I remember what he said. 'Want to come to the big City and work for me?' he said. 'I don't know.' I think I answered that. Yes—I did. I knew I'd said the wrong thing. My uncle sort of smiled. 'This is no work for you.' I was at the shop. 'Will you come?' 'All right.' 'Better try,' said uncle. 'Your first years won't bind you—nor me.' That was all."

"Don't let them bind you."

"But it wasn't like that, when you started to be a lawyer?"

"No, it wasn't like that," Tom Rennard smiled. "I wasn't born in New York, either." What was there David felt again in the word "either"? "My sister and I came East from Ohio."

"And you went to college and studied to be a lawyer?"

"Not college. Law-school at night. Musty long rooms under dim gas jets. Days I was several things. I sold pen-knives for a time. I was a waiter in cheap restaurants. I worked in department stores. My sister earned next to nothing, then. At times, we shared one room."

David tramped on, limbs free. At his shoulder the lake and the farther shore. The mist was lifted from the day. The mist was concentrate in clouds. The day and the water were clear. He felt this man beside him, sharp and strange, in the new lucid air.

His sharpness seemed right for the city. This man was a city man. David did not think there could be dim things—dim lights—ever in New York. Yet that picture he had of the law-school.

"—an ideal setting, don't you think?" Tom said, "for learning the law?"

David walked with the picture of Mr. Devitt's shop. He

loved it. . . . A long low dirty room behind the bike-store. He went in. It smelt of leather and glue and oil, of rubber and sweat. That smell left him. A gas jet burned in the piping that cut down crooked from the crumbled plaster. The dim noise of the place seemed almost to stop his pores. He looked at the gray refuse through the dirty window and did not like where he was. He went to work. His hands worked. His mind took on a leisurely gait with the room, took along with it the way of his hands. He liked where he was. His mind and his hands were clear of the room, moving with it. It was fun. When he tired, he stopped. . . . A city man. He was going to the city. A city man had looked at him and known he was going to the city!

"I wonder—will I ever be a New Yorker."

Tom Rennard laughed. "Soon enough. Too soon."

"I was born in Boston!"

Tom looked at him: "You are not like Boston," he said. "—old Boston, perhaps:—a Boston that was really a field compressed, a gathering place of fields and of field-folks: a Boston I dream of—where Thoreau came."

Still David was elate, not understanding. His legs and his arms were very free. He felt, walking beside this clear quick man, a cloudiness about himself. He had a distant sense of a David Markand: his legs exhaled a smell of rubber and grease, his shoulders pushed along like a slow hill rising to the horizon, his head moved faintly like a tree. If this distant sense came nearer he would laugh. He felt he was not a city man, even though he was born in Boston. He stopped. He stooped and pulled a clump of dripping moss with his two hands. He threw it away. He turned his muddy palms toward Tom.

"Look," he said.

"Yes—I understand."

David wiped his hands on his trouser seat. Tom laughed.

"I don't understand," said David. Then he blushed.

They walked in silence. David found that walking so in silence beside this man he could think: his mind took form: he felt he could direct it. He said to himself: "I must think . . . about the city. . . . That is important. I am going there soon. I don't know what to think. . . . What do I know?"

He said aloud: "What was it you said you understood?"

"How you feel—a little."

"Why?"

"I also came to New York, a first time—once."

"Tell me about it," said David. . . .

A faint trail lagged over root and moss through trees to a grove of locusts—a wide clearing with splotches of gold on blue grass. A girl stood before a tree-stump. It was round and quite smoothly cut. On it, at the height of her waist, was a clay model—reddish rich clay—and the crude hint coming out of a mother with a child.

The girl was plain and angular. She wore a drab brown smock. Her coarse skirt was high above mannish boots. Her sleeves were rolled to the elbows and the muscles of her thin arms were eager and tense. She stopped and wiped the stray brown hair from her eyes, looking at her work. A twig snapped: instinctively she fended her arm over the clay figure: she turned. Tom Rennard was there.

He sat on a rock. "God, that's lovely, Cornelia!"

She came beside her brother. They looked at her work.

"The rain won't spare this one, any more than the others."

"Even in that tree hole?"

"You know, Tom, the squirrels will play heck with it there."

Tom smiled. "Why not bring it home and put it in the parlor, where the Reverend Curtin Rennard can worship and adore it?"

This was a huge joke for they laughed: a serious matter for there were tears in the eyes of the girl.

"What do you think he'd do, Cornelia, if he found this place?"

"He mustn't, Tom."

"What a brute he is!"

"Bless him," said the girl.

"Don't you think, sister," Tom pondered, "don't you think mother perhaps was like that?"

"Of course she was, Tom. What other model have I got? I can't really remember. Seeing I was three when you were born. Knowing father I bet mother didn't nurse you except in a locked closet. But how else do I understand? And I do!"

"I can't remember her at all."

"I either. All one remembers home is father."

Tom got up. "Prayer time, I reckon."

They chose a close recess of little cedars, they hid the model and came away.

The woods straggled down into elders and a last thick cordon of callow poplars. Here was a field. It was untilled and ragged with brown hillocks and hollows. They passed their cow, tossing her tail. The breeze of the end of day glided under their feet, scattered through the field, swung up above the margin of trees. Near the house was no tree. An unpainted barn: a well with hood awry on a flag of shale. . . .

Cornelia and Tom joined their brother and sisters filling the dim room with their thoughts and their bodies. Up to the flecked, stained ceiling their presence filled it. The room made them one. The empty chair that faced them on which lay the Bible made them a body lacking a head. Their shoulders were sharp against each other. Their eyes did not meet, save in the empty chair. Fear was the mold of the room, making them one. Fear also corroded them, shredded



them apart, turned them into what each was: Clarence and Ruth and Laura, Cornelia and Tom.

The Reverend Mr. Rennard was very late. His empty chair grew emptier. The Bible faded. The room was losing its submissive creature. It was bleak, it was larger and less alive. The ceiling went up and the vagrant thoughts of them who waited went less to the ceiling, flew out of the window. Outdoors came in. The chirp of a cricket, the minor-third of a frog in the far marsh, the undulant sighing of trees losing the sun—came into the room. The charm was gone. The empty chair was a chair. The One was a group, jarred apart. . . .

"Father's not coming," Clarence said. "When he comes he's on time."

"You tell the prayers," said Ruth. She was the oldest.

"Nonsense," said Cornelia. "We'll call it off."

Ruth smirked. She was glad her sister had committed herself.

Laura was silent: Laura who was the youngest and yet a terrible age had eaten her. She was lanky and somehow starved. Her eyes drooped, her large hands hung limp, her breasts sagged under a thick brown frock. She was all dull, she was mournful and dry like the bald patches of earth in the field. Laura was the one who was sorry. She did not wish to hear her brother: she missed her father. She loved the bite of his words, the frequent blow of his hand. The Hell he pictured was sweet to her since he consigned it. Laura loved her father with the harsh lust of brown soil for the water that does not come. She was dry and hot and sick with this sterile love of her father.

Clarence got up. "I guess not," he said. "I'm going."

He was younger only than Ruth. He was twenty-four. He went each day in the buggy to Dahlton where he attended

the Presbyterian Seminary. He was following the career of his father.

Cornelia and Tom were alone. They looked at each other. A single instinct moved them. "Let's go back," she whispered. They clasped hands.

They heard the crashing of the underbrush, a deep sudden breathing. They stood there silent. A tall man backed out from the clump of little cedars. He turned and dashed the clay model against a rock. Cornelia screamed.

Mr. Rennard looked at his two children. His fingers trembled. He kicked the ruins of the statue back from his heels and came upon them.

"What's that? . . . You scream?"

Cornelia was stark.

"Stand aside," he ordered Tom. Tom moved as a muscle flicks to a nerve.

The man stood over his daughter. He was gray and erect. His hand lifted. He struck her sharp on the cheek. Then he smiled. His hand lifted again.

"No you don't," she cried. "No, you don't dare!"

"You wanton——"

"No, you don't dare!"

The old man looked at his son and daughter, his face was ineffably sad. It was sad with a sense of sacrilege and of a God proved impotent. It was sad with a hunger that only a blow could appease.

"Go home!"

His command straightened Cornelia and her face stayed Tom.

"We are going to stay here."

The father faced annihilation. He must disappear—disappear from living, or he must find a channel for this surge of wrath. He found it since he was strong. Never had he been beaten in his home. But he had been beaten by life.

The process was old with him. When life cast him out he prayed. He avenged himself on the nations of men and women who refused to be his. He sent them living into Hell. He avenged himself on the pitiful bitter hurt—on the remoteness—of Beauty. He called it Sin. Sweetly he escorted men and women and the burden of love into Hell with his prayers.

"Daughter," he said, "you have committed sins that make me know the helplessness of intercession." He was gone. . . .

Tom was down with his head in his two hands, crying. Cornelia bent over him, smoothed his hair, kissed his wet face feverishly since she needed to do something with her tingling body. Her nerves leaped with strain. Deep down, something was alive.

"Tom,—Tom," she whispered, "Don't! I'm glad. Aren't you glad? . . . It had to be. It is good. . . ."

The boy looked up: he saw in his sister's face what he felt in his heart—their life had died, their world had foundered.

"We'd better go," said Cornelia. "You know what I mean. Life at home—after this?" She shook her head, her eyes closed.

Tom sat on his rock. He knew it was his turn. He knew he sat there, a child. He knew he must rise, a man. Never without Cornelia would he have dared, could he have found strength or direction. But could he fail of her challenge? Could he be a drag on her strength?

She stood, her eyes shut, over him, touching his hair. "I can't imagine it," she said. Still he sat. His eyes were open. They saw the mangled model of clay. He got up.

"We'll go," he said. "We'll go East. We'll go to New York! I'll work. I'll find work. You'll have a chance to study."

The blue mist of night grew between them as they faced each other. "Tom——" she faltered now. "Why not?" her

faltering nerved him. "I can do anything. . . . You, sister, you've got to be an artist—a great artist. Wait and see."

"Do you mean it, Tom?"

He was sober,—like a panting young creature after a race for life.

"I never meant anything before. We're going. . . . We're going to-night."

They clung heart to heart like lovers. . . .

Curtin Rennard returned to the house and sent them all—who were there—to their rooms. Laura asked after the absent Cornelia and Tom. He struck her. The household slept in a silence like black in which many colors are lost.

Within this silence came Tom and Cornelia. Two candles burned in the room of Ruth. She sat on her bed. Her brother and sister stood. She was in her nightgown, a fat miserable woman of twenty-seven. Her body, folding and breathing, seemed a part of the heavy matting, of the rugose cover, of the thin sheet. She was stout and her voice was thin. She had fat wide arms and her nose was sharp and thin. She twirled her misshapen toes.

"Come along with us, Ruth," said Cornelia.

"I can't."

"Do you like having to run over to Dahlton every time you want to see Jack?"

"I can't."

"Don't you want to get free?"

"I can't."

"—Hiding like a sneak in the woods to love: just because Jack's a carpenter."

"I can't."

"You could marry Jack, if you left."

Ruth was silent. She sat, transfixed a moment. A great tide of misery swept her: she crumpled back in her bed. She wept.

"I can't. I can't," she looked up. "It's too late," she ended.

Cornelia seemed to understand, though it was all blank ugliness to Tom.

"Last year, even—if I'd dared. If you had helped me then. Now——"

"Ruth!" Her sister went to her and held her.

"It's all over now. He's had about all he wanted. . . ."

She wept. Cornelia was helpless. A great shame was in the room. It took Cornelia and Tom and branded them. Their youth was a sin. Their courage was a heartless boasting. Before this miserable sister who had lost her hope their lives were suddenly sweet and simple. They felt shame.

Tom took Ruth's hand. The woman sat up again and looked at her brother. All the shame was with him, with Cornelia. Ruth sat in her nightgown, her body naked before them; she was simple and undismayed. It seemed to Tom in this hour Ruth was great.

She was quiet. She held Tom's hand, she reached for Cornelia's. She kissed first one hand, then the other. She smiled.

"You—go," she said. "I stay here, but you—go."

Her tears were past. It was as if she had passed from herself. She said: "I'll bet you've no dollar to go with!"

This was Tom's business, he felt. But in the candlelight and before this so strangely noble wreckage of his sister he could say nothing. She laughed silently. She pattered to a cupboard under the two glowing candles. She dug beneath a bewilderment of clothes. She drew out a wallet. She came back to her bed.

"There are two hundred and twelve dollars in here,—and I must get rid of them. Yes: I stole them bit by bit from the house allowance. God! I'm glad. But I can't stand the thought of them being here any longer."

Her words came more hard.

"I did it for us—Jack and me. I was going to bring it as a surprise the day we ran off. I never told him."

There was a pause: a song in it.

"Please!" she thrust the wallet into Cornelia's hand. A pitiful blend in her voice of beseechment and command.

She got up. She kissed her sister's mouth and eyes. She faltered downward until her head touched Cornelia's skirt and the hand clasping the wallet. So, half kneeling, she stayed long.

A sudden resolution lifted her. She took Tom in her arms. Always Tom had despised her. He had known her, hypocritical and false, the meticulous slave of her father's household. Why was she great and noble only now when hope had left her? Why, thinking these things, could Tom not abide the hot fold of her embrace?

"Good-by," she said. "Hurry."

She urged them to the door. All three of them wept. . . .

This life, which Tom's words had given, was now David's. They walked. They sat on a rock fairly dry. David paddled Tom in his canoe. David was alone at *The Villa*. This life which Tom's mood had given, was now David's. . . .

"All the time," Tom had said, "I was dreaming to be a lawyer. Sister was dreaming to be a sculptress."

"Is she?"

"Yes. . . . Both of us what we dreamed to be. Neither of us what we dreamed to be."

The week went. The last day came. They decided to go to New York together. They packed each his bag and sent it ahead to the station. They were free-footed under the last free morning.

The field was a gash of brilliance across the wooded fore-

head of day. The trees were very tall: their feet dwelt in dawn, their heads touched the noon. August—and David's mother dead since May. The field was a gash of light in David's mind. . . .

He loved his mother. But his love remained at the depth where it began: one with his needs when he was an infant and she nursed him, a child bruised against the world and she consoled him. She was gone: but the glow of her motherhood still warmed through his life. Like his love, his loss was mute. He did not know how deeply he loved, he did not know how deeply he had lost his mother.

He wound up his affairs—or rather he watched while the benign agency of his uncle wound them up for him. He pocketed a fabulous mass of bills. Almost in the spirit of a wanderer after Beauty he came away.

The spirit of one who believes in the presence of Peace like the running on of the wind, like the running on of a river, like the spreading of flowers upon the fields of the world.

He had come to this lake, gemmed in green purpling hills. His calm came with him. He listened to neighbors' talk, he wondered pleasantly before the world. All of it was a thing outside. He saw himself at work in a repair shop, at table with the gentle woman whose breath was a well of feeling. He lived in a dream that was real and was not yet over.

Sudden this man! Walking beside him now, upon the gash of the world, his new experience was a hand that touched him—brushed back the hair from his sleepy eyes—pressed fever to his brow—grasped his throat so it was hard to breathe—struck him!

David found he walked in a hurting wonder: the woods were part of this wonder: the man beside him was part of a whirling wonder. He was like a slumberous water that the wind struck sudden from all sides. The waves of his feelings were up and down. His deep self—his past—rose through

the lashed fissures of his mood. He knew that his old life was dead and how he loved it: that his new life was being born and how he feared it! At the day's close the night: at that day's close the City!

The day was gleaming glad but David walked in storm.

The vision of his mother . . . he raced home against the thunder he could see above them. Great drops of rain were already on the pavement; the day was night. He burst into the kitchen where his mother worked. "My! it is going to storm." He saw that somehow it was still light in the kitchen. It was different from outdoors. There about his mother was a bright calm spot of day in the body of storm.

She said: "Well, David, you got home in time. What are you worrying for?"

David looked at his companion. Tom Rennard was clad in strangeness. David looked at Tom Rennard and the room where his mother worked receded: he could burst in on it no more, hear her say:

"Well, David, you got home in time. What are you worrying for?"

It was all moving away and his arms were helpless. There was Tom looking at his watch. Tom looked at him, who somehow was breathless beside him.

"Well, we got here in time. Fifteen minutes ahead. What are you worrying for?"

A shudder through David. The world was magic—black magic. He went beyond the station to a little hedge where a tree stood alone. He sat there alone. His heart made a beating music through his head. He held his head in his hands, there were tears in his mouth.

"Mother, mother," he murmured. "I miss you, mother."

The train crashed into the station: he had to return.



## II

**T**HE pulse of moving left them numb. The pensiveness of rapid flight through the world came near them, could not transfix their numbness. Men and women in a railroad car—serried, determined; pointed the train, flung it against the city. David sat next the window. He saw the world fly past as if afraid and offended. The green comfort of meadows was too sweet for the sharp earnestness of the travelers. They had no will for the shadow of trees and the cool ambiance of little rivers. Their mood was a straight hard hot track of steel along which they flung: their mood cut through smile of fields, slumber of towns. Their minds hurled the train. . . .

Tom and David sat together swathed in the pensiveness of travel. David was restrained and somehow broken. Tom made efforts to read. Mostly he held the book in his lap and looked before him. He spoke to David but David was impossible to speak to. Tom understood.

His own coming to New York, eight years before, was there. It was an ecstasy, an angry birth. Manhattan girdled in flame, Manhattan a woman, terrible, virgin, and he aware of his own love and of his impotence before her. Moving in the train with Tom, this time beside the mystery of David, as that first time beside the mystery of his fate, was the seed of Tom's fate—his past. Moving in Tom along the iron rails. . . .

The train and the rails and that world were gone: were become a cloud of sense lifting him elsewhere. He dreamed of New York, of Ohio . . . locust grove, slender, reticent, a-

thrill with the restraint of some secret . . . he dreamed of them as if they were not, he only was . . . he a dream.

Night cast down curtains. Tom looked at David again, and seemed to enter and know him. David was moving forward to the City as to a death he must pass through. The City was a cloud for them both . . . though a different cloud . . . whose blackness wreathed far over their afternoon. But David was distant from Thomas Rennard. David felt he might know this man and the City at a single moment: know them at once and together.

Sharp long shadows crouched across the aisle of the car. Heads and shoulders of men and women loomed from a common gloom that expressed their oneness. Men and women were single-mooded, single-loined, they were a swaying, night-bound creature.

Four men—more nearly boys save one who was old—got up and reached to the racks above the windows. They took violins and mandolins from cases. They tuned them. The old one who was leader struck a chord. A chorus of voices—male and wistfully female—quavered about the car.

Only the four who stood were visible. Song rose from underneath them, tremulous and pervasive, rose from the gloom of the car. It was a song of folk, a song of yearning. Passion shot it through and passion ribbed it, it was a song of tender sorrow. The voices of women rose in it like waving of lonely trees in a wide bare field—rose and swayed, wept and subsided. The voices of men rose higher, mastering, comforting the low wail of women.

The melody throbbed higher. Sharp flashings of desire were now the women's voices: the men were weary and disconsolate, dying down. The song was over.

A new silence lay in the car. The car ran on, subdued in it and sweetened.

The leader lifted his violin. He was a man of gray hair

and tremorous shoulders. His back was to David. The three boys rose again. Two of them very dark with hot tender eyes and glowing hair. The third was light, all his skin and hair was golden. David knew they were foreigners.

There was laughter in the song. Sunlight aglisten on tears. Laughter of longing beyond hope, laughter of proud submission. The women's voices welled like a sudden sea. Their liquid accents spoke of the softness of hands and the roundness of breasts, of the defiant promise of loyal children. Laughter of love and blood. They sat half lost in the gloom—wistful maidens, battered women—breeders of the defiance of loyal children. Their eyes glowed as they sang, their lips were round and wet with their song. The music rippled and foamed and raced. The men joined in—hard, staccato lancings of laughter—the music of men who had such mothers. The car was caught and was quick in their ecstasy. The car laughed on, raced on, under a song of low fields and mounting conquering laughter.

David was lifted up. His veins were eager with melody, his eyes were dim. Never had he heard such music.

"Who are they?"

"Little Russians, I think. Ukrainians. Landless folk whose song is their land."

Tom also was moved. Differently. He listened to the music—thinking of the silent passengers about this little group of immigrants—the voiceless Anglo-Saxons, himself.

"If I had songs like that . . . if I could sing such songs!" David wanted to say. He said nothing. His own violin seemed a mute thing.

They were singing. An almost silent song, a song without words, a song so wide and deep alone the cries of women and men could compass it. Voices rose and rolled, faintly, wavering. The song was flame: it smoldered in the car: it glowed there, a little flame in a black cold hearth.

The song leaped up. Darts of burning, flashes of spark: a man's voice crackled against the women. The song was a blaze. It roared; it danced and consumed.

David and Tom saw the rapt eyes of women—stronger suddenly than the gloom. Saw the sway of the men, singing and playing together.

The song died down. It was ember, crimson coal. It was ash. . . .

Night was there. The lamps burned fitfully overhead. Without was a dark rushing of buildings. Night and the City was there. The singing was over.

David's heart was full of the blood of songs: they were singing still in his heart. He looked out of the window.

Black. A dim rushing of buildings—a rushing of swarming streets gutted with yellow lights. Life out there was burning against black—was being swept into black.

In the window David saw himself reflected, saw past himself to Tom and the vague faces of the car. His own face was pale, there in the frame of the window. His own face lay half blotted out in the swinging of streets as under water. Tom's face was pale and clear. David looked out of the window seeing the City: and saw imprinted there the faces of David and his new friend—white, ghostly, real. His heart beat with agony of portent.

Another silence. Silence of preparation.

The car prepared to die—to be shattered into two-score lives, into a thousand passions. The steel-straight mood racing to the City was done. In its place a flutter of moods, a scatter as of birds under low skies.

Above the lamplight, under the swaying ceiling, shreds of song hovered, torn remnants of voices.

The train shrieked and shivered, it plunged into a tunnel. Smoke swept away David's vision. The City was gone from

the window and the reflection in it of himself. Teeming pouring blackness without.

David turned and looked in the car. It was hot and hard to breathe. Thin threads of smoke seeped in from the windows. They writhed about, they trailed upwards to the ceiling. Smoke was where songs had lingered. . . .



### III

"... Of course, my dear nephew, you must stay with us until you have found a comfortable and suitable home for yourself in the city. . . ."

SO had David's aunt, Laretta Deane, written to him and made him somehow doubt the amiability of the lady, despite the fact of her welcome. He had never met the family of his uncle. He felt a significance in this. His mother used at times to talk of Aunt Laretta as of a fortunately distant fact.

"Your father and Uncle Anthony never did seem to get along," she said. That perhaps disposed for her of Anthony's wife.

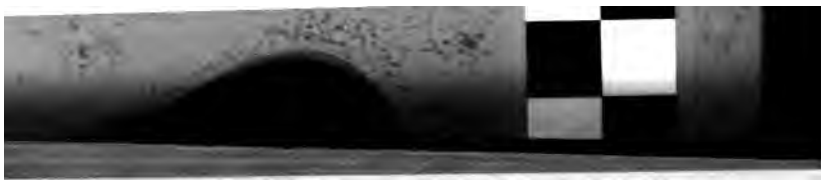
Mr. Deane answered the bell. . . . David stepped into a naked hall, hanging in camphored drapery. The varnished floor swept away in parabolic shadows; the bannisters of the stair were a red lacquered flourish, a sort of scrolled battalion along red, lacquered steps. There was his uncle, rather hot, coatless, diminished.

"Well—glad to see you, my boy. . . . Have a good journey?"

David was looking for more glory. It struck him that the house was bigger, brighter than this man. The traditional Uncle Anthony seemed to require the setting of his visits to the little town. He mumbled amenably.

"Your aunt and your cousins are in the mountains . . . I'm alone, as you see. Come in."

He went before David up the stairs. They sounded hollow and yet they were bright.



"The parlor's closed up for the summer. Step in here. Have a drink of something cool?"

"Just vichy, thank you." His uncle moved toward the decanter beside the paper-littered chair where he had evidently sat.

David stood still, holding his cool glass and aware, though he looked beyond, of vagrant feathery bubbles in the water. Mr. Deane leaned over the decanter.

In the center of David's mind was the scurry of papers—Sunday papers—on the floor, on the table, on the chairs. Chairs protruded flamboyant scrollery from under the drab gray of their summer dress, like little old coquettes. Massive pictures heaved on the walls, and these were covered also and betrayed glimpses of finery of gilded frames. The family photographs were bare. David found himself sharply looking at a stentorian lady and two pretty girls with down-turned mouths. He drew his body toward his questioning uncle.

Mr. Deane found questions hard. Three times he asked if David had enjoyed his vacation: three times if he was ready for work. Then, with a sudden sympathy, it came to him that such solicitude was perhaps wearying.

"Better sit down," he said. Gently. At last, "Well—I guess you're tired. You can go to bed if you wish to. All ready for you, my boy, you see."

There was a certain pride in his remark. David caught this. He did not understand. He was in a mood where what he did not understand he could not like.

He found his two legs not quite enough to stand on. He was uncomfortable, shifting, now he had gotten up. He followed his uncle to the fourth and topmost floor of the empty echoing house. In each narrow hall as they passed through, a gas-jet trembled in a red rugose globe.

"Here we are, my boy. Bathroom below." Mr. Deane smiled. "I'll have you waked in the morning. Sleep tight."



## THE DARK MOTHER

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David heard him stamp heavily down to his easy-chair, his chaos of papers, his whiskey. As he had turned, he seemed to wink at David. Was he trying to be kind? A door slammed outer silence. The room was alive. . . .

The Vice-president of the Railroad had an estate three miles beyond the limits of David's town. The Vice-president had a somewhat remote sister who used to visit David's mother. Although Mrs. Markand always tried to stop her and to change the subject—it shamed her—this lady would talk of the glories of that estate and of the pride of its owner. So now this room was talking of the Deanes. A remote room it was, thrust out in limbo—an obviously spare room. But it was full and stridulous with observations.

David sat on the broad bed. Two dormer windows were open, and the street came in. A low ponderous murmur welling and declining. Fogged and blue. With sudden periodic flashes of near commotion: a passing cab, a car clanking. The pervasive sense of low hard pavement drenched with the beat of life swung up to him in flat strokes.

The room had the same fogginess, the same color as this new world: the same dull compression of incessant life. It, too, was a scabbard for some lancing emotion. Doubtless his glimpse of the family photographs had determined David's mind more than he knew: the muffled finery of the house.

David had the sense of a prison; or was it a church? There were hearts here that beat against this place, and yet they were worshipful voices. He had never thought of the arrogant consistence of walls and of an aunt. He was not sure of his cousins.

Unknown to himself, with the naïve prescience of the wild caught thing, David found the spirit of the house: its angular and mournful fixity, its irrelevance of finery and comfort. He had been shocked to find that he knew these sorts of furniture and ornaments: there had been sporadic visits to stately coun-



try parlors. The City's contribution seemed mostly the house itself, perhaps its work upon what was in it. . . . A City of somber houses sentineled like conquerors on sodden streets.

David settled back in the wide bed and drifted away; a cloud of porcelain fans and gilt settees and majolica statuettes swept in his mind with a mingling of soft girls, and beat on the frown of gray walls. . . .

It was night when he awoke. A numbness was over David. He thought: "Why don't all these things thrill me more?" He felt the plethoric breathing of New York. Night had always meant to him the freedom of dreams, play of stars. Here was a night that stirred with stifled pain. David jumped out of the bed and went to the window.

An unbroken flank of houses rose from the mist of the street. They were lightless and sleeping. They were not dreaming like most houses he had known that went musing by night. They were heavy and hurt. It was as if the day had struck them and blinded them; left them there in a coma. David saw the quivering glow of the sky. The air came to his naked throat with moist fingers that trembled. David crept away to bed. . . .

"Your bath is ready, Sir."

He heard this, he recalled the several knocks that had preceded. A sun slanted into the dormer windows, lay bright there in the corner of his room. But the shadows were everywhere—hostile hangers-on.

At table below he found his uncle, still coatless, moist, full also of night's shadows. His uncle looked worn and tired. A drawing weariness in his own body, over his own face, told him the same shadows clung to himself. City morning lacked the resilience of new birth. It must be the usual thing: for Mr. Deane had answered his question with "Yes, I slept fine,"



## THE DARK MOTHER

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and David looking back over the swift night could see in it no cause for this new agedness that waked in his veins.

"A cool night," said Mr. Deane. "You were lucky, lad, not to be introduced to the city in one of our broilers."

The swinging door widened, the maid brought David his breakfast. A melon, eggs daintily propped in porcelain funnels: he must split them, he guessed, with a sharp stroke of the knife without taking them out: coffee that cut mental mists. . . . What curious impressions he was having! He sat so long in this room, he noticed the shadows on his uncle's face, the shadows in his own blood: he had not seen the room. He felt now as if he had thought the room was dark, and there was no use trying to see in the dark. The door swung wide: it was as if himself had just come in. Yellow woodwork in the pantry, an entering maid. He saw the heavy panelings in oak and the resplendent chandelier in the air and the straight-back, red-plush chairs and that the maid was like himself from the country. She was a heavy solid girl moving in grace. Chestnut hair about the sweet round eyes. Her smile was sweet, he did not feel like smiling; she was the sort that smelt of warm milk; David thought to himself what a shame she had lost two of her teeth.

He liked her standing close to him, serving him: her arm touched his shoulder. He saw that the ceiling was painted: it sagged down in a verdant circle of flowers: obese angels cavorted about very green garlands.

"We're friends," his senses spoke, "we are both strangers."

Mr. Deane rustled his papers: he dipped toast in his coffee, noisily lapped it up, sucked his mustache. It was droll how his red tongue shot out and caught the brown drip of his mustache. Mr. Deane was talking.

"We'll go down together, my boy—for the first day." He consulted his watch. "It's eight-twenty now. As a rule, I think Mr. McGill will want you at the office at eight. It

takes forty minutes from here to the office. Fifteen minutes for breakfast." He reckoned and rang the bell. To the entering girl: "Anne, Mr. David's regular breakfast time will be ten past seven."

His face had been long, looking away. It turned again toward David, and broadened. He winked. Yes: he was trying to be kind.

"Does your watch keep good time?" he asked. Why should this question seem to bring him relief? "See to that, my boy. The City is run on *schedule*. On *schedule*. That's why it's a great City. That's what makes a great City out of a piece of country. Manhattan once had fields in it. And a few hills. Oh, yes—Central Park was a squatter's marsh. Wait till you see it with its new asphalt roads! Some day there'll be asphalt roads all over the country."

"It'll be hard on the horses," David felt he must inform his uncle.

"Hard on the horses? Maybe. Maybe it will. That's the rule of civilization. It is hard on us all. Hard on the workers and hard on the bosses. It's worth it. Progress must have her dividends. When Captains of Industry die of overwork, should we spare horses? We'll do without them!"

Mr. Deane made a long strip of his napkin and ran it horizontally, methodically over his mouth. "You see," he went on, "you'll have to change your outlook on life, now that you are to become a part of the great City—a part of the great Machine. You'll be proud of it, soon enough. The New Yorker is a man of service. He serves Business. He serves Country. He don't think of himself. Look at me. Your Aunt Lauretta is away vacationing. I stay here and work. I don't think of myself. I've not taken three weeks off in twenty years' time. I stick to my guns. They can trust me in the City. They know I am faithful: I am always on the spot. The easy jolly ways of the country don't go far in the

Metropolis. We're a beehive, we are. Work! Service! And the ambition of each man is to die in harness. Of course, I mean the men who *succeed*. That is the one way to earn real money in New York. To think of absolutely nothing else: to give time to absolutely nothing else. There's the American Ideal of Service for you." He paused and glowed upon his nephew who sat, stiffly erect, trying to believe, in order that he might like this talk. . . . "And, my boy, what's the result? Don't you know? . . . America is the result!" He flourished his white hands. "The great Democracy. The land of three and a half million square miles. We've made it. The American Ideal made it. I've been out West. I've seen our country. The Rockies that you could drop the Alps into—lose them. The Grand Canyon that's a mile from top to bottom. The geysers in Yellowstone Park. The greatest, most populous, the *biggest* country on Earth! And we've made it. We're making it, my boy. American Ideals."

Mr. Deane stopped again. He reached for his climax. He found it. "I presume," he said, "I presume no sane man will deny that William McKinley is the greatest statesman to-day in the world."

He said this with a new impressive quiet. He had heard a speech of Senator Black: he had shaken hands with him. He recalled his gesture.

David nodded. He felt he must do something. He felt a strange discomfort. Why should he resent these patriotic words? why want to doubt them? Should he not have found glory in believing? His mind dropped back to Thomas Rennard and he knew that Rennard would have contrived to scout these boasts. He found himself relieved. He wanted Rennard as a companion in the guilt of his mood. He was quite sure it was guilt to doubt a word of his uncle's. No question of that.

He sat beside him in the car: his uncle was reading his third morning paper. They spurted and clanked, they swayed down the great iron street. David was swung in the wonders of this clanging cable that tossed them headlong, while the wheels groaned to be free of their rails, that dropped them rocking and sighing to a halt. What he saw was himself surrounded by mournful men—clottings of men under straps—and all devoured by the news they sucked from their papers, all immersed by the same strange shadows—angular shadows—he felt in his own veins. Beyond the maze of men ran out the mazes of traffic. Capering strides of horses with yearful nostrils; interminable houses, motley, jagged, restless, broken off into squares and corners like herded wild things before the assault of other wild things more volatile than they. So it seemed to David: these buildings grouped in panic were of one stuff and soul with the scurrying, arrogant throngs that pressed about them and clambered through them.

In its startled rhythm David's mind wandered aimlessly. He forgot about the car: when it moved with any respite it loped like a weary and whipped horse. The broken rhythm made openings for his mind: patches of his past came through the interstices of moving, came torn and poignant. He saw himself in his easy greasy clothes at work at home: he felt the shoulders of plain men beside his shoulders: eyes of brothers looked into his eyes and his hands, black with oil, clasped other hands that were warm. His hands and theirs were near each other—far, equally far from himself now moving through a city. He saw not patches of his past but of himself, as if he had been looking through this clot of men at a man beyond them. He had a vision, harried by the car's toss, of a young man alive with many others. They marched along a hooded way into a shadowy house. Their loose clothes, the grease of their hands, the smile of their eyes was going to be cleansed away. He saw his hands clasping,

so far from his hands now, hands of men who were brothers and who were losing hold of a warmth held in the clasp of hands. . . . His drifting mind touched a book he had loved: *The Tale of Two Cities*. He saw a tumbril with its sodden burden moving through the Terror of Paris. He saw the death-claimed gaze of men moving through crowded streets. He heard the groan of wheels. Seeing these far things, when his uncle jerked his sleeve—"Here we are"—he was not far away. . . .

"That's the East River yonder."

David's mood changed. . . . They walked down a narrow street whose name was a legend. David was walking on Wall Street. Glass casements fronting heavy buildings, huge masonry pillared by slender stone—the grace and loom, the hypocrisy of Power. Spawn of the buildings: men with naked singing nerves like wires in storm, and women with dead eyes, women with soft breasts against a hard tiding world. Furious streets. A street wide and delirious with men shouting and waving their straw-hats like banners. Streets narrow and somber that curled like smoke across his feet. Streets eaten with secret moods. Streets cluttered and twisting with pent power. Streets pulsant like hose. Streets slumberous like pythons. Streets writhing and locked.

A wide gash of sky. The sun was a stranger. The blue was a burn.

They went toward the River. Black houses were lost among masts of ships. Black herded houses crawled towards the wharves. Men were nervous like rats feeding on grain.

David walked on Wall Street. Walked toward his uncle's office that was to swallow him up. Walked down to where it waited him, a block from Wall street. Life was sea-yearning. Shops sold sails and compasses and binnacles. In the smart of the salt a scent and a sense of spices. Coffee and wines were at home here in the grime of the North, had

brought with them the linger of their homes. Tobacco. Musty housings for jagged yellow leaves. A brooding, reeking, murmurous street.

David fell down the funnel of a world. The waters touched him that touched far lands. Pregnant waters. He had been like a virgin whose lips trembled with fear. He was like a virgin whose lips tremble with desire.

He stepped into a doorway, behind his uncle. . . .

The Deanes returned from the mountains in a body. Mr. Deane, despite his virtues, was taking a vacation. A few days after David's mustering into service, he had gone to join his wife and daughters. David was alone in the barren house, with Anne to cook his breakfasts and make his bed.

David was alone with Anne in the house. But in the house was the spirit of its owners and more really David was alone with that.

He moved uneasy through the City, he lay uneasy in this house that was his only home. He tried to win a certain temporary comfort. He was helpless against the press of the Deanes, thwarting his rest as he sat eating his food; against the press of the City as he worked at his desk downtown, earning his food. It was beyond his reason. The days were fire. The nights were fume of heated stone and brick. And within the stone and brick, restless spirits marring his own. The City gasped out the heat of the day by night. David was seared between alternate fires.

The heat of business dulled his will, depleted his body, aroused his nerves. A new equation. At the hour of closing, he was tired and yet only partly tired. The discrepancy gave accent to his fatigue. The rounded, gentle weariness that he had often known, which took him whole in encompassing arms and lowered him to sleep, was not this. The City worked on him with an uneven spite. There he was, with the low

sun hot in the west above the lurid Hudson: limp and moist and spirit-dead, but with senses leaping and a hunger ranging his veins.

In this state, David took his supper—trying to stifle the heat with iced tea and iced coffee. In this state he tried to sleep.

He lay naked in bed. The sheets clung to his flesh. His skin prickled with irritation.

So far as work emptied him work was good. A new experience was a new vessel—what David needed to pour of himself. But the season was dull. Mr. McGill was gone, and already his first task, to sort and enter bills of lading, was a tedious habit. It seemed not work to David but the kind of punishment that was occasionally meted out in school: like copying the commandment one hundred times: "I must not talk during hours." There was nothing more or else to do, until the Manager's return.

The office was a haphazard, a languorous, loose beast functioning dully through the inertia of its past and the prod of its future. Clusters of girls formed like flies on a kitchen table. They chatted and laughed and wiped the clotted powder from their cheeks. They took long hours for lunch, buying cakes and cream-puffs and olives from the store and eating in the office. The boys hovered about like greedy dogs, barking and sniffing and showing a tendency to rear on their hind legs. The girls, loving the sense of their desire, kept them unsated. Most of the occupants of the inner offices were absent. On the other floors, above, below, the rumble of the packers and the crash of boxes made a dusty murmur. David had seen these infernos of industry, caught the acerb flavor of wet tobacco and sweat and heat, observed men moving in the mist of their hands and women serried at filthy tables, with haggard arms that were forever plying and hot eyes that were still. He preferred his purgatory. He hated the hour of



lunch when he must step down into the flaming stream of the canyon and be part of it, hunting his food. He was glad when the hour of closing came like a silent charm, stilled the drone of the work. No clock was needed to announce this hour. It went over the cluttered room like an invisible hand: its tenuous sweet fingers touched every one and everything. The girls at the writing machines clicked more slowly, their eyes wandered more and more, their hands brushed back their hair with a new hope. . . . A last spurt puckered their brows and their lips: then the power died. The boys at the tall ledger tables twisted legs about their chairs and stopped sharpening pencils. They whistled sudden snatches of a tune. Wide ranges of conversation sprang up. Talk wreathed forth until girls in the new silence of their machines addressed each other clear across the room: the men in the ledger alcoves laughed at jokes given forth from the front windows. . . .

Sudden, like the last spin of a top, a tremor ran through the office, work toppled dead on its side.

Girls were in hats: cigarettes sprouted on the lips of the boys. Overhead in the sudden noise of stillness, the new mood of the machines. Life was out of the window. In groups of two and three the girls were sucked away to it: the boys followed, with noses forward and dragging limbs.

The streets were cauldrons that had overflowed. The sluices of pent life emptied upon them. Work had banked these fires: routine had stifled them to smoke. Now, the coals were strewn low and long. A draft of release whipped down the channeling gutters. There was flame. The houses brooded like disused ovens, storing their heat and their rust.

The vision of this was a searing stripe on David's mind as he lay within the night: was a dark band as he awoke upon the morning. He was naked in bed. His strong arms were thrown up like an infant's. His open palms pillowed his neck. As he breathed, the muscles in his abdomen rolled gently.



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He was a powerful boy, with white skin and a wave of golden hair upon his body. He had pulled his bed directly beneath a dormer window. The sun bronzed his head. The clear soft strength of his face came out in this sleepy light. David dozed and prodded his senses into getting up. He was strong and refreshed in the morning. He thought of work as a contest and knew he would win. The Hell of labor was upstairs where the men sweated in open shirts rolling cigars, and he had seen the women fold back their waists till the tawny dust grimed the skin of their breasts. He was in this world's Purgatory. In the quiet offices beyond, the inner ones bound by invisible threads of gold to the ease of high houses in the winter and the distant smile of the mountains, was Paradise and was the goal. David thought that he had given up the free fields of his home and that now, already he was set on winning them back. This, it seemed to him, was droll. He wondered why he had thrown the fields away, when so evidently the promise of the City was to be able to revisit them. He wondered why *he* had done so. He thought of Anne, who perhaps was forgetting the scent of the clover. He recalled that if he hurried with his bath, he would have more time at breakfast—more time to be with Anne. His long legs were out of the bed.

It was hard to pierce to Anne. Both he and she were embarrassed with their desire to speak freely. They were shy. One morning she said to him:

"Mr. David, if you would want to, why don't you come back and I'll cook you your dinner."

He thanked her and refused.

"You've worked enough, I think."

"Oh, I don't mind."

She had not pressed her offer. He had commanded his pleasure. So it must be her pleasure. She was that sort of woman.

"What do you do in the evenings?" he asked her.

"Oh, not much. I'm always to bed early. It's too hot for dancing, ain't it?" She hurried through her answer.

David suddenly knew that when his sickened will and stinging senses came to the house at night, she was there also! While he lay awake in his bed, a wall was between his nakedness and hers. It was both painful and sweet to think of this.

The black heat rolled with enforcement through the City. Life was wet fire. A murmur of anguish was the breath of the night. He lay wide-eyed, dreaming. The air was a prison. His senses yearned toward the quiet of death as release from this breath of the world—from these fumes of a dead sun. He was under surprise when it knocked at the door.

"Mr. David, I've brought you a cool drink. May I come in?"

He did not move. He did not reach for his sheet. Anne came through the blackness and gave him a glass. He gulped wet coolth.

"Thank you—Anne."

She took the glass. She bent down, her hair was a wonder over his eyes. A wonder, since her hair was hot and still it was good. He felt her moist lips on his chest. . . . There was the constant spirit of the house, the forbidding intrusion of knowing that he was a guest and she a servant, that this was evil. . . . Anne was gone.

No word at breakfast. . . . That night David found he was awaiting her and she came. His sheet was over him. He took the glass she offered and placed it on the chair; his arm drew her down till she sat beside him on the bed. He felt her body burning under her cool gown: all the world was distant, so that the house was distant too, and for once the Deanes were in the mountains.



"No, Mr. David. . . ."

He laughed. He was scornful: the Deanes were in the mountains.

A hot black sea was the world, rolling away. His bed rolled upon it; only his bed was above the sea. It was haven. It was haven for him and his woman. He drew her down, and his mouth sought her lips, her neck. His mouth felt the wide loveliness of her body. It was distant still, there was a gown between them. The gown was wide as a world. Her body was growing great, until it was another sea that would cool him. It was a sea of fire, but the fire was white and would cool him. It was needful so.

She struggled. . . . Sudden she came of her own broken and sick will. Their wills were healing each other. She was willfuller now than he. She held his head in her arms, her flesh was all about him. Her gown was gone.

He found that she was lying beside him, crumpled: holding herself away. He found she was a little bruised woman with bruised little breasts and hair tangled, knotted in heat. He found he was moving away from her.

He found that the night was coming back. It was scornful and triumphant. It waved onward, and upon its bitter burning waves came the Deanes who were no longer in the mountains. There they were in the room. A vast febrile room. Filled with the City and its desolate shadows, filled with the Deanes. Huddling diminished in a corner a guest and a servant.

He spoke to her: "Anne."

She answered: "Yes, Mr. David," so he knew she knew this also.

At breakfast the sweet silence of restraint. A Puritan's vow in the withdrawn eyes of each other.

But the heat did not stop: nor the wearing away of will and the rebellion of nerves. Anne came again. It had noth-

ing to do with the wide remainder of their lives. It was somnambular. She was the soul of the heat—the gladness of it. So they got to be happy together and not to mind very much. They got to laughing and to forgetting. There were never many words. Breakfast was the break from a dream.

David deciphered her silence.

"I am wiser than you believe. I am wiser than you," it said. "I am thankful for you. You need not worry. Oh, I am very thankful."

All one week, Anne's step on the threshold of his room was gone. David fumbled in bare feet along the tunneled hall. His flat palm felt her door. It was locked. The end—sweet end of unreplenishment.

No word further: no glance toward the past to open it once more. . . .

They were really there—the Deanes! A cool, bright night with stars crushed above the crude wave of the city streets. They had traveled through that night and those stars for this city. They were there in the early morning.

They came in discussiveness and noise, as a luxurious gift comes wrapped in crackling paper. Once unbundled, they were rather silent. David sensed an unease and discomfort in their coming—a token of what happened in souls of their kind when they were taken even for a day from the rounds of their habits. David observed with what swift recuperation they merged into the imprint of their house; how their house seemed to sigh and settle with the recapture of its soul. Sudden, there was David, completely strange, dizzily away: with the memory of his amour an unbelievable, discreditable dream.

He watched Anne with the other servants that had come sink swiftly into the cloud of servience: lose her charm and her sex: dwindle in an instant to be an appendage of her



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mistresses, an inflection of the wishes of these reigning women. By the shock of this a sort of osmosis went on in David.

He found himself partly identified with Anne: had they not been one together?—and, so, diminished, humbled. Another part of him flung her off and merged with his cousins, his flesh and blood; become Anne's remote and indifferent master.

He stood there awkward while the process shredded and dazed him. Between these warring halves of himself, he fell away from the sharp social trial of the moment—the need of fronting these women. His aunt took note of a vacancy about him.

"Well, David, it's been a long time waiting to know you." She added to herself: "He's stupid."

Her second daughter, Lois, supplemented her aunt as one generation should another: "I think he's dear"; she looked at him keenly, "but what's bewildering him so?"

She came very close to him, and held out her hand. "I'm awfully glad to know you, David." He took her hand so patiently, that she held up her lips, "We're cousins," she explained and she laughed.

With great seriousness, he kissed her and liked her.

Muriel, who was nineteen and three years older and wiser than Lois, watched the little challenge of acquaintance, smiled sourly, busied herself with her bags.

"Well," she said, searching for her powder puff. "I suppose it has been frightfully hot?"

Mr. Deane had been quarreling with the coachman about the fare: his own carriage was not yet in service. He puffed into the room. David saw and at length realized how changed he was, in the true setting of his wife and daughters. He scarcely noticed David.

"Got everything?" he asked excitedly. "Nothing lost? My! it's hot! That robber robbed me. Lauretta—you have the

keys? I must run along. Where's breakfast?" He mopped his brow, he paced; and David wondered whether the executive task of shipping his family to New York—or some obscure disturbance—was the thing too much for him.

David stood quietly apart. He unstrapped bags; untied boxes; stacked rugs and tennis rackets into obtrusive corners. They let him work for them, quite as they let Anne work. He found himself dwindling from them: he wondered why he minded performing these casual tasks. He found he did not care for this identity with Anne, although a part of him knew it existed only in himself. He looked at her—not even in her. She was very moist and humble and unattractive in her black skirt and her white apron tucked high in her corsage. He could not separate her body from that apron—chiefly from that attitude of serving. He wanted to say to himself "Well—she served me!" He wanted to be high-handed, cynical, indifferent. He managed to lose all sense of this toiling, nodding girl as one with the sweet woman he had held in his arms and held with all his body. There he was, scrutinizing Lois: her smart slimness; the perfect abandon of her body not to him but to her own position. His cousin wore a bright blue satin dress, simple and short and trim. Her corsage was caught up in white lace:—the scheme was near enough to the livery of Anne to make the difference crying. Her half-bare arms were white. Strangely white. David guessed what pains she must have been to so to keep them. She had taken off her hat; her golden hair fell daintily—unmoist, immaculate—upon her forehead, and in crisp ringlets down her neck. She had a tender smile that seemed to take one in and laugh one out. Her features were smiling, soft and round, and were yet tinged with an astute concern that contradicted their benevolence. The white-slippered feet and the white-stockinged legs were an increased offsetting flirt of humor to her serious brown eyes. The attentive quality in Lois was her grace, her

tender aloofness, her sixteen years full of pride. David found himself quite willing to deny his amour with a servant.

Anne needed to come up to him and ask him:

"Will you be going downtown to-day, Mr. David? Or will you be here to lunch?"

"I'm going downtown," he said sharply. He looked in her face and found the soft intimate sense of her offensive: a too cloying sweetness for his stomach. On the heels of his discovery a great remorse and disgust at himself. It drove him toward a demonstration of bravado: he needed almost to make clear to this searing presence of the Deanes that he owed Anne much, was more like Anne than like them, and was aware of it. This too was checked, left him dangling.

Lois caught him looking her through, and came over to where he worked at a 'stubborn bag: she said: "Let me help you, David."

"No need," he said with a tone studiously similar to the one he had addressed to Anne. There was balm in that. It seemed, however, not to disturb Lois: and Anne was out of the room.

His cousin helped to the extent of loosing one strap. She sat on the gladstone and was suddenly languid, and forgot. . . .

With Lois cornering his eye, David found he had the whole group in his mind. Mr. Deane was still at paces on the floor, calling for breakfast. David was amazed at his insignificance in this concise room. His wife paid him no attention. Twice she brushed against him, crossing the room: twice also she brushed against a bag. Her reactions were one. Muriel went up to him and said: "Father, let me have about twenty dollars more, will you?" Mr. Deane's pacing slowed against this new ordinance. He stopped, snapped the bills from his wallet and handed them to his daughter. Muriel was at the moment looking over her shoulder, giving an order to Anne. She did not stop. Her eyes did not go with her receiving hand. Mr.



Deane resumed his pacing. His wife said, half in the air: "In a moment, Anthony, we shall be able to spare Anne." Lois, musing in her corner, suddenly flared forth: "Father, you are making me nervous with your walking like a lion in his cage!" But at once her face went soft, she forgot what she had said. Then her father had left the room, following the bright discovery that Anne had left before him.

David felt it was time to be off for downtown. He went to his aunt.

"Good-by."

"I hope, David, you don't squander your money at those expensive lunch places."

David said he did not. He did not add he was afraid of them. He went to Lois.

"Good-by."

"Good-by," she smiled. "Come back soon."

He went to Muriel. She looked up surprised.

"Oh," she said. "Oh. Good-by."

And the revelation came to David. These four persons were not a group: in no true sense were they a group. The families that he had known were strictly groups. . . . Even his own, though in his father's days the rhyme of it was pain. Some single rhythm, some common color composed them. Here were four persons. Their spirits had nothing to do one with another. He was quite sure their spirits were not aware one of another. They spent one man's money: they obeyed one woman's orders: they lived at the behest of a sort of mutual complacency together, sharing the pleasures that were in need of union for support. But they were not united. David felt it, touching their fingers, as he said:

"Good-by."

It gave him a strange, even a sick feeling: as if he had seen a man devouring his own hands.



#### IV

**I**T was voluptuous for Tom Rennard after the trees and the birds to give himself once more into the bond of his profession. Through the free woods he walked in manacled anarchy: through the City's thralldom he walked free. He plunged into work. He touched the tasks of the approaching season, knew it would be his best, measured his dominion above success and was glad like a bird perched on top of its cage. He prepared a brief for a case months away from trial: he played with the strategy of an appeal in a suit not yet argued. In the brash nights of the refilling City he sat in hotel lobbies and let his mind cut clear through the flaccid provincial crowds. He journeyed uptown to a baseball game: drank in the rawness of the joy of others in a ball swiftly caught and clouted: let his heart fill with the tang of the game's intricate and lissome grace against the sprawling pleasure of the mindless. Once more New York, an atmosphere, lay, swirled, clouded and shone around him. Then he shut his desk, an early afternoon, and went to see his sister.

Her studio was unfashionable in location. It was the top floor of a crumbling red-brick house in the moiled middle East Side of the city. It was east of Murray Hill, west of Stuyvesant Square: the elevated trains snorted their cinders not far from her flowered window. Cornelia began to make money and her habitation blossomed. Persian shawls appeared in appropriate corners: new rash adventures in color out of Paris gladdened the white walls: slender vases came from exile in Chatham Square. Tom called the place his refuge from the city.

"Hello," she said. "I am glad you came. I'm lazy this afternoon." Tom folded his coat away in the little bedroom. It had the air of a cell. The white walls were bare, the white iron bed was narrow; a small pack of books stood in the corner of the floor.

"You take it easy," he said, already at the task, "and I'll prepare you some Turkish coffee. Have you any of that orange essence left?"

He was adept and he needed to ask no further questions.

They settled and sipped and talked. Cornelia was on the couch. Tom squatted on the floor. Both of them had lighted cigarettes.

"Well, what adventure?" she asked.

She looked more than the three years older that she was. She wore an unembroidered smock—a dull, muslin drab. Her feet were sandaled. Her hair was drawn tight back over her head, where it could not interfere with work. Her eyes were soft in the harsh angles of her face.

"I was on a vacation, Cornelia. You know that means that I took care nothing should happen to me."

She laughed. "That efficient you're not, dear boy."

"Well, there was no semblance of adventure. I tramped and drank a lot of glorious milk and slept nine hours a night."

"And——?"

"And swam and paddled." Tom wagged his head with the catalogue.

"You met somebody interesting?"

He stopped. "How do you know?"

"You always do, don't you? Who was it? The girl, at last?"

"No—not the girl. And you're wrong. Really, I had a deliciously dull time."

She did not press the matter.

"Daydon says I ought to move now I've won that prize. He says no one will visit a studio so near Third Avenue."

"Are you going to?"

"I am not."

"I am glad, Cornelia. Just because you have begun to have money is no reason for spending it all on rents."

"That's just what most New Yorkers do, is it not?"

They both laughed, and were silent.

"What you said has a lot of truth in it," Tom spoke at last. And his sister knew he had pounced on her observation as a text. He was comfortable now. He had been just a bit uneasy, questioned about his trip. There was the sign of a release from nervousness in the brightening of his eyes and the slower puff of his cigarette—the way he curled up his legs, limbered his arms and began to talk. Cornelia watched him with a vague amusement and a subtle reservation. She would let him have his speech; then she would pin him back to his trip and the thing in it which made him nervous. In this mood she listened.

"Really," he said, "the true inwardness of New York's rising sky-line has been the passion of New Yorkers for high rents. Have you ever thought of that? What a handy substitute for other, remoter standards they have found in the price of housing? Of course the gullible talk of the fact that New York is a crowded island. They forget the miles of dilapidated and discarded masonry within hail of their stylish towers. Some day the historian will understand. He will say this: 'Money was so deep their worship that they mis-priced all treasures of life which did not blatantly announce it. They left their walls empty of beauty, their larders empty of health, their houses empty of grace, in order to pay high rents to the lords of land. These fabulous sums were the pride and the decoration of their lives. The height of New York rentals and the high

buildings that were their symbols became the chief expression of Metropolitan Art!"

He laughed. Cornelia kept silent.

"The historian will finish in this tone: 'Surely these were a foolish people, ripe for destruction.'"

"Give me another cigarette, Tom." She was resolved not to help him along. Tom came to silence. He felt her mood.

"Well, what is it?" he asked.

"You had better look out, brother mine. You could easily get to be a typical New Yorker. I hate talk."

"What I said wasn't true?"

"Yes. But it was talk."

"Oh, boo! Don't be so serious."

"Weren't you?"

"Of course not. I was speaking the truth. Even, I was prophesying. To be serious at such a game is to risk being a fool."

"Most of your talk, Tom, is a side-stepping of something in you you want to hide. I have noticed that."

Cornelia was half up on her couch, facing him straight. Now, she was ready to pin him. "It's a bad convenience, dear," she went on, "putting up all these brittle outer observations when some one threatens to get under your skin. You do it so well."

She smiled; Tom straightened his legs and met her gaze. He knew her direction. "You wouldn't understand," he said.

"Why? Just because you don't?"

This was a true shot. He acknowledged it.

"Very well," he spoke dryly. "There was a boy—a mere boy—up there. From New England. For some curious reason he upset me. I don't like to talk about him. I do want to see him again. It's all rather odd because he was really quite dull. We had damn little to say."

In a flash Cornelia's mood changed. Her perceptions had



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controlled her—the acute and angular and severe in her. Now she was seated toward him on the couch; it was as if dominion had passed over to her eyes that were large on her brother. She spoke tenderly:

"It's not a girl yet, is it, Tom?"

"You know it never is. Girls can't disturb me. I can master women. I am cool and sure before them. But so I was with this—this fellow. Yet it seems, as I look back—quite irrationally, mind you—it seems as if we had had a contest and he had won." He paused.

"You probably *talked* to him—flaming revolutionary talk." Tom shrugged.

"And he was shocked."

"Precisely," Tom burst in. "He was the shocked one—the dominated one, the silenced. Then, why this foolish desire to see him again and throw him on his back?"

"It has been troubling you?"

"I have imaginary conversations with him. I walk up and down Broadway with him, and say: 'See! what a Gehenna this country's greatest city is?' I take him to theaters and gloat and declare 'Trash, eh? They call it art in New York.' Even at my office. I show him through my papers. 'All chicanery,' I announce. 'That's what you want to enter, is it?' I shame myself before him."

"Think it over, Tom," Cornelia followed his silence. "You should be able to find out the thing that is troubling you."

Tom sat a bit diminished on the floor. Sedulously he flicked the ash from his cigarette, each vestige of the ash; his fingers close to the hot, red tip. He looked up:

"This chap has something I lack and want: a sort of pure sincerity. He'll go far—and be miserable as the devil."

"Look out! Aren't you the one who is afraid of misery?"

"True. I want him to give me the saving treasure. I want

to give him the saving moderation. Then we could both be saved."

Cornelia laughed. "What *are* you talking about now?"

But Tom was very sober. "He is all wings. He has no eyes. He'll dash himself against the sun. I am all eyes. I see everything. But where are my wings? I'll freeze to death from far away, seeing the sun."

He got up. He paced the room.

"Oh, this is nonsense. You are right. I liked him because he was a naïve, country lad. I was afraid I had hurt his innocence——"

"You are dying to kill it."

Tom stopped and faced his sister. "That's not quite fair, Cornelia. Not kill it. Steal some of it, perhaps."

He was talked out of his mood. He was light-hearted and full of interest for a thousand things. It was a trifle after all.

So they played through the afternoon, they went arm in arm to dinner, they spent an hour in a terrace with liqueurs before them. They talked of her work and her triumphs and the quaint jealousies of artists. All this because it was his greatest pride. And several times Tom broke out in admiration of New York: in praise of her vast largesses. He was confident and proud. Cornelia smiled again—her angular, critical self. . . .

Before her door he kissed her good-night.

"We've made a pretty good start, from Dahlton, Ohio, haven't we, sister? Pretty good, pretty fair."

She changed once more to the tender part of her nature: she ignored his mood.

"Good-night. And Tom—that country boy—bring him up some late afternoon?" Her eyes alone smiled. Tom startled, imperceptibly.

"Surely," he hurried to say. "Surely . . . if I see him."

Nature cellared its profusion. The sap of life was sucked to the roots of things. As the year died, the house of the Deanes came to life.

Chests gave forth finery and color. Curtains were up, barring the archaic sun: dun colors were away from the florid chairs. The safe-vaults let go their silver plate and their gold, and from the hot-houses came flowers. Streets were chill, skies were mournful; in the narrow endless purlieus of the disinherited, of the nine-tenths, began the hunger for coal. . . . But it was summer in the City.

The position of David was straddling, but not too insecure. He was part of the Deane household. How goodly a part devolved on his own discretion. If he made himself liked, there was no comfortable share he might not win. He was part of the Deane Company—the Deane machine of subsistence. A small and trivial part with a distinction. This he did not feel until his fellow-menials later had ceased feeling it for him. In his low place there was always the seed of future sharing. He was the Boss's nephew. In the low places of the others, there was always the seed of permanence. These were the Boss's victims. The Boss would keep them victims if he could. He would have all the pretty terms of a century of special pleading to hallow his act. But surely the world was a smiling place for David Markand.

"My boy," said Mr. Deane, "you are on probation. If you prove your worth, as you may well imagine, I will be glad. American enterprise is the home of the free, the contest of character and brains. The true man wins the prize. And of course, I don't forget who you are: that you are the only child of my dear sister. Nor must you, my boy. I have no sons of my own."

Uptown he was still somewhat the stranger. But he was the friend of Lois and he grew confident. They liked each other. Different dispensations from far separate sources had thrust



them close. Now both of them stood together at the gate of the brilliant world Muriel went to evening after evening. They saw Muriel return, full of tokens of its splendor: full of weariness and hidden joy, full of pride and hidden knowledge. David meant to enter the gates with Lois. In the waiting it was natural that they talk, hold hands.

She would have said that she found him interesting. There was her own life, which in her mind lacked quality. It was an empty atmosphere occasionally pierced by suns and falling stars. The light of these was her sustenance and was rare. So Lois starved.

She would have said that he was easy to talk to.

In the conventional sense he understood nothing: in the sense in which life was a ruled open page for Muriel and her mother. But in the outlaw sense where these two were blind, he understood miraculously well. She could skip the rote things of the world in talk with him, dwell on the stirring and uncharted. They met in a sort of reticence about the obvious. Not deliberately, but because he could not otherwise have understood. Two persons speaking different tongues could live on elemental planes. They could convey and satisfy the sense of hunger, they could fight, they could make love. The difficulty might come when they attempted to dine together, to quarrel civilly, or to get married. Here, a common set of words was needed.

So between these two. Social engagements, family traditions, judgments of the technique and manner of existence she could not broach with him. She did not need to. Her school, her friends, her family webbed her in such subjects. The wider ranges that Muriel would have cut through as vague became their meeting place. They talked about life and beauty and the future. She was sixteen and David twenty. In these vast fields they were one fledgling age.

They were often alone together. The room on the third

floor that faced the street was the living-room of the sisters. And Muriel was usually out: and the parents stayed in their own quarters below.

Dinner's end was release. David sat there uncomfortable and Lois sat there indifferent. Mr. Deane had few words. He was weary at night. What energy he had poured into the business of eating. Mrs. Deane was voluble enough, but she needed no attentive ears and she had none. She talked: her husband ate: her daughters spoke low together: David made his shoulders narrow and occasionally straightened with a shock when his aunt's eyes turned on him. The last sip of coffee meant the last moment at the table for the girls, whether their mother was in the middle of a sentence or their father was asking them a question. In this case, the question could be curtly answered in the process of exit.

"Come, David," from Lois, "you're finished, aren't you?"

If at first David was reluctant to leave so suddenly, he learned that nothing different was expected of him. Mr. Deane lighted a cigar. Often he was left alone to smoke it. He sat, his body folded and heavy in his chair, his eyes folded and heavy behind smoke. Anne came and went, clearing the table. He was unperturbed. His soft mouth wreathed and pouted: occasionally he smacked his lips. He was the picture of attainment. In his empty gaze, in the lack-reflex slumber of his muscles, in the dim movements of the heavy smoke, there was a gross Buddhistic character. It was clear that attainment in his American faith tended not toward heaven, but toward a sort of flatulent Nirvana.

Meantime, Mrs. Deane was upstairs, under a lamp, reading a novel; and when her husband did not eventually shake himself, with a slow and sleepy evolution, to his club, he was in bed before she closed her book.

Often members of the plenteous family of Mrs. Deane came to dine. But the atmosphere of the table was ample enough

to embrace them. There was the same dull air, charged with the vocal passion of Mrs. Deane and the sharp reserves of her two daughters. Only one sister—a Miss Dikes—could match the commanding Lauretta. They were profoundly sisters: when she was at table, the currents of air were shifted rather than changed. Always, Lois and David were willingly excused after dinner. And Muriel managed often to be out when her relatives were there. Her mother scolded and occasionally wept at this disloyalty in her child. But the child was already stronger than the mother. Muriel seldom quarreled back. She sneered and her eyes flashed: when she spoke, it told.

Upstairs David reached for a book.

"You have your homework to do, I s'pose?"

Lois smiled and nodded. "Oh, yes. . . . But I'm not going to do it."

"You'll not get your certificate if you don't watch out."

"And what good would it do me, if I did? . . . We're going to talk." She snatched his book. . . . "Unless, of course, you are more interested in *The Banking System of the United States*."

"Lord, no!" David laughed.

They sat together on the broad, cushioned couch whose gay blue and dull gold were a telling contrast to the dull blue and bright gold of the mother's room below.

"What are you going to do when you become rich?" she asked him.

He looked at her. She asked him this as once before he had said to her: "When are you going to get married?" She had answered: "I am not going to get married, perhaps." He had laughed her denial away.

So now: "I am not going to get rich, perhaps." And there was she, scoffing at him, holding back her head and saying: "Please, do be serious, David!"

He was. He began to think aloud.



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"Not everybody gets rich."

This had no effect on her. As his silence marked his words as her answer, she shook her head with a faint impatience.

"I know. But what's that to do with us? You're my cousin, aren't you? You're our sort. You're in Daddie's business."

"What sort don't get rich, Lois?"

"Oh, I don't know." She looked at him as if he were stupid. "You ought to know, better than I. You see 'em all around you at Daddie's business."

She also had been set to thinking. "How are they different from us?" she asked. Then: "Father says they simply aren't as clever. Most of them drink too much: and have packs of children: and don't bathe very often. I guess it's all these things."

"It must be. But you can't really see much difference. Of course, *you*. You're different. You're a—why, you'd die; you couldn't have been born, anywhere else. But I work with five other chaps in the shipping office, and they're just like me."

Lois laughed. "What nonsense. They're not! You're much nicer." She was giggling in foretaste of the wicked truth she was about to utter, "you're—I'm sure you're *much*, much cleaner."

She was like a pricking rose under his face, laughing there on the couch. David resolved to be angry.

"That's rotten of you, Lo. You're no democrat."

"Of course, I'm not. I'm a Republican."

David, enjoying his indignation and unconsciously aware of the excuse it gave him, reached for her wrists.

"Don't!" he commanded.

"You are!"

He pulled her to him, and put his arms around her waist. He said: "Stop making fun of people." Then he kissed her.

Lois stopped laughing. She was very still. Her eyes glistened.

"Do you think, if you hadn't been *nicer*, and *cleaner* and everything, I'd let you *kiss* me?" She jumped up and away.

He liked her intimacy. It flattered him. He did not wish to tell her of his work at Mr. Devitt's, and how easily he might have stayed there long and forever. And she liked his reticence, feeling its power. She liked the veiled promise of pleasure and strength that he suffused from all of his big being. It frightened her.

She was seated as far away from him as she could manage. Her bare elbows were on her knees and her chin was cupped in her hands. The pressure upward faintly distorted her soft mouth: one corner was open and two teeth bit white and hard against the lip. Her throat tremored with her amusement; the rose mesh of her waist fell forward in suggestion of the warm swell of her girlish bosom. David believed that she was purring. He saw her teeth biting their hardness into the blush of her lips: he saw how smooth and round her arm was. He said:

"You let me kiss you because I've a right to." He was aware of the retreat in his words. ". . . because we're cousins."

She merely lifted her face a bit, as if he were stirring away. "All right. We're going to play now that we are *not* cousins. We are just you and me, do you hear? So you mayn't kiss me anymore."

Already he was forward. The game started. The goal was implicit with them both. In a fortnight's time, David had won his kiss. He was very sure that Lois was very lovely: he was almost sure that she did not return his kisses because he was unworthy. . . .

David sat at his long table in the office, lost in a maze of figures which gave a different answer each time he questioned

them. He was languidly certain the figures were laughing at him, held him in contempt. About him yellow pine, hard human bustle. He looked up through the mist of his discomfort; he saw above him a slender and sleek young man with a smile on thick lips.

"My name is Duer Tibbetts. You're Markand, aren't you?"

David was not sure whether to keep his seat. He was twisted in indecision.

"I am a cousin of your aunt, I work over there under Mr. Herding in the Cashier's Office. I have just come back from two weeks in Virginia. I was told to look you up and make you feel at home."

For the pause, he stood there a bit ill-at-ease himself.

"I'll come round at noon, and we'll go to lunch." He was gone.

David had the sense, walking through the streets, of a young man marvelously sure and hard and clever for his years. He gave forth the slightest word as a pronouncement.

"The very hottest weather's over," he declared. "Greibeck's is a great café. You must go there often. I discovered it last year, one day I was lunching with Mr. Farnam—H. L. Farnam of The Liberty Trust. Always go downstairs. There are women upstairs. Downstairs is the place for talking business."

Duer Tibbetts thrust the long printed card under his nose and then told him what to eat. He ordered as if he were in a great hurry. He drank beer with his meat. "Don't you want *anything* to drink?" he asked as if unwilling to believe in any organic deficiency in his new friend. He called the waiter by his Christian name—but never looked at him.

"We must get to be friends," he announced. "Don't bother about the boys in your office. They're not our sort. Stick to work. . . . Stick to work and stick to your uncle. He's a prince—a prince," he chanted with emotion.

"I've been here three years. Since I was sixteen. No

college nonsense for me. I'm assistant cashier. You'll find the old man is hard, but he is just. Yes, he is that. But he has his silent little ways of pushing you along."

For the first time, he raised his eyes and David met them. He liked him better. So this Duer Tibbetts was to be his friend? As soon as he began again to talk with his eyes once more down, David examined him.

He seemed engrossed in his own words. He paid them out, as if they were coin. He talked with a certain muscular emphasis of his lips, a periodic pointing of his left forefinger. His forefinger always was detached from the others. The rest of him remained immobile. A gold chain fell straight from his lapel to his coat pocket. His hair was so blond that near the temples and behind the ears it imperceptibly faded into the color of his skin. His fingers were wider at the tips than at their base. His voice was high pitched, coarse-grained, mostly a monotone. . . . David met his eyes and liked him again.

Tibbetts' gaze clinched his firmly; almost too fixedly: as if his eyes lacked the pain of encounter. They were lashless blue. Tibbetts had the soft eyes of a boy, the shallow eyes of a man who has not ventured where the boy's eyes yearned.

David turned his own deep uncertain gaze on him: in the retreat of his glance and the veil of warmth that suffused from the contact it was altogether clear which was in truth the older of these two. But neither David felt this, nor Duer Tibbetts, steadfast and staring. What came from their encounter was David's sense of respect and wonderment for Duer Tibbetts, and Duer Tibbetts' thrill of respect and wonderment for himself. To this end he talked. A gentleman can boast only before an equal. And Tibbetts was a gentleman, if for no other reason because he felt the quality of David.

"A smart chap. You know: the sort who get on in the end," he reported to his father. The young protégé and the



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powerful attorney of Deane and Company discussed the new arrival. They said many things. The paramount detail that this was the nephew of Mr. Deane, they had no words for: but this was what they were keenly thinking. The suppressed thought came out in the rhythmic beat of Mr. Tibbetts' thumb against the desk, in the over-emphasis of his son when he said such common words as these: "I like him. He is slow, but what is slowness? You never can tell what's underneath. The fact that he don't know much now shows merely that he has lived in a little town. Lots of good stuff has come from little towns."

Now, he talked lavishly and with diligence to impress David who sat passive, trying to learn, telling himself that he was learning. He talked of projects and profits, of Mr. Deane's subtle aggressiveness and of the Company's prosperity. He spoke of the great law-suit which his father had won for the firm from the Feddlesby people. He spoke of a swinging figure that had gone from Deane and Company to help elect McKinley.

"Measure it with our payroll, if you want to *feel* how much it was to give." He did not divulge the payroll. He said, "We" when he meant David and himself; "We" when he meant the Company; "We" when he meant America. There was a deep philosophy in this confusion. But David was still far from grappling with it, and Tibbetts did not dwell in the sphere of definition and reflection.

"Yes, sir," he pointed and flushed with his prophecy. "We'll be in Cuba in less than a year. Don't you forget it. We've got to kick the Spaniards out and go in ourselves. Then, we'll earn enough from our dormant Las Daciendas plantations to buy up every relic factory in Key West. It's a coup that's certain."

All this puzzled David. He was not sure whether the "We" who must kick Spain out of the West Indies was the payroll of



Deane and Company: or whether the "We" that was to grow subsequently rich in Las Haciendas was the citizenry of America. It was all a bewilderment of lines.

The weeks of his residence in New York he had been sedulously reading the papers that came daily to his uncle's house. He knew that America's interest in Cuba was a humane one grudgingly forced on her. Her wrath at Spain and her forming resolution to have Spain "out from her back yard" were due to her Christian worry for starving natives. The impulse of brotherhood was quite clear in the papers. Yet the effect upon Business seemed equally clear in the mind of Duer Tibbetts. Brought together in David's mind, these two clarities precipitated fog.

He went away, respecting the more this young man who saw the light while he walked in darkness.

Relief of Cuban sufferers and relief of ravaged tobacco plantations: America's crusade for love and a great Company's contribution to the coffers of the Republican Party: the free lists of business and the advantage of being a nephew—it was too much for David's untrained mind. For David needed to "conform." And David needed to admire.

It was a Sunday afternoon. The room where David sat, the room of his talks with Lois, lay in the languor of a refracted sun. It faced north. David could see the full rays beat in the flaming brick and the warm brown-stone of across the street, be absorbed. Here was a low vibrancy—strayed residues of sunlight that had lost their incandescence. The room had its compensation. Lois' gay hand was over it. The couch had a dappled welcome in its cushions: "outrageous" her mother called them. A strip of Japanese brocade laughed on the wall: and Lois' desk, with its bright brass knobs and its jolly fluted legs, hinted the tempo of the occasional letters and the desultory homework of its owner.

David had emerged from Sunday dinner. Rather feebly he

wrestled with a Sunday paper. He was alone with it and it was winning. The article was discursive and plethoric. It dealt with Tammany Hall and the imminent Municipal Election. The City had just become the Greater City. Manhattan had swallowed Brooklyn and Staten Island. Once more it served as the shining symbol of the age: for it had gone through a merger, and it was superlative in size. Now, Tammany was attempting to recapture the swollen booty. It was, according to the writer, hopeless. "Richard Croker is back from Ireland and his horse races. But he will find only a ruin and a name where stood the corrupt organization that netted him his millions." Later: "Mayor Strong is beloved of the rank and file of the people. Under him, under such of his competent servants as Street Commissioner Colonel Waring, the people have learned the blessings of a Reform Administration. They will never go back to Tammany. They have had high wages and clean streets, better conditions in their tenements, less disease and a low death-rate. They have understood. Tammany means misery and vice: Tammany means the seduction of their daughters into the gutters of sin: Tammany means all that crime and corruption mean. Leave it to the people of the Greater City to choose a successor or an undoer of our Reform Administration."

This was all clear. But the general terms of the article bewildered David. Why, in the face of the obvious conclusion, this note of frenzied worry, of desperate pleading? The people surely could be left to choose between happiness and squalor, between life and death. And why these paid announcements of the Tammany candidates—these arguments in their favor alongside indictments which made it probable to David that Tammany would poll no single vote? The article was full of contradictions of the sort that had twisted this last month of his life into a question-mark. Mr. Croker, breathlessly returned from England, found his Tammany a ruin and

a dream: yet "efforts will be made to elect the Citizen's Union ticket such as have never been attempted in the century-old fight against Tammany, the City's incubus." The people had enjoyed three years of almost paradisaical amelioration; yet "it must not be believed that Tammany's old tricks of getting the people—appealing to their hearts and stomachs—have been forgotten." Mayor Strong was the idol of the poor; yet "the old cry of corporate control and a 'rich men's ticket' has been raised." The puzzles spread out into the past. The article concluded with a brief historic sketch of this Tammany-monster that in ways so foul brooded upon the people. "The study of Tammany makes it clear," one sentence went, "that it can never be reformed. The Tiger can not change his stripes. Tammany means and has ever meant a single, evil thing." Yet, to David's dumb amazement!—several of the old crusaders who had ousted Tweed and killed Tammany in the "sixties" were a year later officers in Tammany Hall! Here was a great Reform Governor and Presidential nominee—in Tammany Hall; and the present presiding financial genius of the City's projected Subway system. While there, in a corner of that very page, heading a committee of social knights who had pledged body and bank to hold Tammany at bay was the man—yes, the very same name of the man—who had been Tweed's lawyer, who had *defended* Tweed when he was caught rifling the City.

David sat struggling with all this as well as the spirit of Sunday dinner permitted him to do so. In his town, he had heard disparagements of Tammany. He had always confounded it with the National Democratic Party. He remembered how they had heckled Jo Cleary, the machinist in the shop who was a Democrat.

"Well, what if Tammany *is* Democratic? Do you think your bunch of silk-stockings Republicans is any better? They're both of 'em crooks. Here's the difference. If you



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are broke, you kin get ten dollars through the front door of Tammany: and you kin get a boot through the back door of the other Party."

David recalled that there had been silence after this reply. He was in no mood for thinking it all out. He knew only that Jo Cleary had straight sharp eyes and that he had always trusted him, found reason, in more immediate matters, to believe him. Cleary was full of strangeness. He wanted Ireland to be independent: he got drunk with telling regularity, each Saturday night. When he was drunk, he was jolly. He would sing pathetic minor songs of suffering with laughter in his voice and wild flourishing arms.

"D'ye see?" he'd shout, "This is how we keeps 'em down. 'Down, down, with the pigs, ha, ha!'"

When he was sober, Cleary was morose and a good workman. David knew enough to feel the pathos in his drunken jollity. It was a thing, unlike all these about him, he instinctively understood. It was a thing, among others, that made him mark Cleary's sober words and give them credence.

So David stirred against the Sunday paper. He was glad, when Lois stood there in the door to take him away from the vice of thinking.

"There's some people downstairs, David, just dying to meet you. Will you come?"

While he looked up at her, she was still. She felt the flattery of his warm eyes. She was slender and sweet, with her bent body leaning against the jamb. She seemed to David a glowing creature, a product so desirable that the world which brought her forth must be perfect also. And Lois saw him, clouding in his chair, trying to rouse himself to the business below: she liked the brash vividness of his clumsy body, the naïve confession in his face of all that spoke in his heart. She half realized that this freshness did not grow in the sheltered rooms of the City: she regretted it.

David followed her downstairs.

He felt as he stepped in that they were looking at him and that they must have stopped abrupt from talking of him. It was as if one voice had spoken and were now cut off. Yet David had heard no word.

He was being introduced. He saw that his business friend, Duer Tibbetts, was in the group. He gathered that these were his parents and his sister. They and the Deanes were all knit together. He was outside. He had the sense of an aperture, laboriously open, slowly sucking him in. He felt himself resisting.

There were words; he answered enough he presumed. Mr. Tibbetts told him that his uncle was already hopeful of his success; Mrs. Tibbetts invited him to dinner. The young girl was beside Lois. They were faintly apart: a mere quarter-note out of harmony. This introduced a tremor into the heavy rhythm of the room. David liked it. Instinctively, he moved toward the two girls. In the dissonance of their atmosphere he found himself: the group receded into its individual components.

He observed in Mr. Tibbetts an air of aloofness, of studied condescension that was half nature and half inspired by David. Duer imitated him, he saw now that Duer always imitated his father: he was a depleted pattern of Mr. Tibbetts. Mrs. Tibbetts talked most easily. "I am Cousin Laura," she announced with a confidence that showed how fully her habit was command, "and this is Cousin John." She was a very thin lady with a bobbing adam's-apple. She was clad in glimmering blue satin and her feet were slippered not so slenderly as to conceal their astounding inharmonious width. David saw the height of her cheekbones and the scooped boniness between her nose and her mouth. She was a type familiar to him in New England.

In all the families he had yet come to know, the women



were spokesmen. The men burst on occasion from brooding silence into cantankerous volubility. David was not surprised when Mr. Tibbetts began a speech.

It was different, however. It came from between thin lips. It left the broad complacent countenance unmoved. It had none of the weight and breadth and clarity of this man's wide open collar and of his wide white vest. It seemed very little to come forth from so voluminous a frock-coat. Mr. Tibbetts talked; David could not altogether keep his eyes from the cylindrical cuffs and the crinkly patent-leather shoes. These seemed the proper focus of attention, as in other cases the speaker's eyes.

Mr. Tibbetts was saying that it was a great joy to have a new young member of the family. He said this several times. He seemed to be talking down to David: to be choosing emphatic, monosyllabic words: to be repeating his welcome for each bright button on his waistcoat. David knew that Mr. Tibbetts could have spoken better. He recalled now that this was his uncle's lawyer, was a great lawyer, had his portrait occasionally in the papers.

"Duer tells me you are already friends. I am glad. He will help you downtown. You must help each other. I'll tell you how. Have a race. See who can do the best work. Who can work hardest. That's not a bad idea, eh? You two—having a race—spurring each other on to new efforts. Racing each other to the goal of hard and successful work. Do you understand what I mean? All life is a race. Ever thought of that? All life is a race. You two men must help each other in the spirit of friendly Competition. . . ."

It was plain that Mr. Tibbetts loved this conception of his. He caressed it. He rubbed it up and down. He could not let it go. David, standing there, counted the buttons on his waistcoat.

Mrs. Deane spoke: "Why don't you young people run along upstairs?"

Automatically, Lois, Miss Tibbetts and the two boys rose from their chairs. It was as if they were being thrust away by a sated creature. David could feel the swift rushing of the current of attention from him. The single eye was turned away: the single word knew him not. He was nothing.

He saw these men and women, sure, satisfied; he felt a certain cruelty in their assurance and in their satisfaction. He was closer to the girls. Muriel had not budged from her seat. In Duer was a certain mingling of movement and of motive. Duer was changing his status. Muriel had changed already. She had qualified and been absorbed. She was one of the possessors, one with this generation which had achieved. Duer was on the way. David saw something like a royal whim in the intensity of the brief interest of these elders. They had looked at him as possible food, as a possible new adhesion to their body. They had not remotely thought of him as a separate human being with heart and mind and soul of his own. In a way poignant, however vague, David felt this, felt further the meaning of their swift disposal after the appeasement of interest. Here, at last, he discerned a Group. He knew that in its elemental consciousness he must be either a good thing for its increase, or a bad thing altogether. . . .

Upstairs another sudden shift in mood and stress.

Duer all at once was middle-aged and weightily silent. He looked on the two girls with a forebearing reticence. He had left a part of himself—a longing part—downstairs. A part of the group downstairs—the complacent part—he was trying sturdily to carry on.

Lois and his sister were hard to impress. Their bright indifference outshone his drab and manufactured ease. A certain sublime comfort lay beneath Duer's manifest disapproval

of their gayety. It said: "Time is with me. Wait until you are women, as I am a man. My way wins."

Lois placed Miss Tibbetts before him with a ceremonial air.

"Fay is my *very best* friend. So you two must be friends, too: for my sake. . . . Kiss!"

He obeyed joyously. He liked the spirit of this. He felt its unregeneracy. Already, though he knew it not, he was arrayed against the informing tide of this life about him. And when he was near a girl whom he liked, much of David's inhibitions melted away.

Duer made his advance. He needed an ally against the flippancy of these girls, these girls about whom he would have said: "They know nothing about life: they know nothing about Business."

"Well, how go things?" he swaggered, throwing up his head with a nonchalance that was belied by the keen worry of his eyes. "Satisfied with McGill?"

David retreated. "Sure," he avoided an answer.

Duer knew that in such gatherings as now downstairs men must talk politics and business while the mentally segregated ladies discussed servants and dress. Duer had the passion of conforming. Life to him was an exclusive club to which he yearned to belong. Service was a means toward being voted in. He had all the fervor of a mediæval page grasping for spurs. But David was miserable in this intruding sense of fitness. He liked the anarchy of Lois more. He was curious about this girl whom Lois loved. He had nothing to say to Duer.

So the four joined a circle from which Duer spiritually retired. David did not know how to skate. Lois and Fay already lived the delight of teaching him. The Rink would be open soon. They argued the kind of skates he should buy.

"And if you fall," said Lois forbiddingly.



"Oh, he will fall. Beginners always do."

"Well, never you mind. We'll pick you up. Won't we, Fay? We'll take care of you."

She seemed almost tender. Then her hard giggle.

"No one shall laugh at you either," Fay declared.

"No one except us," said Lois.

The thought came to David that he would have preferred her saying: "No one except me." But it was plain these two hunted together. David found it hard to understand their likeness.

"Children! Children! Come now. We're going." The voice of Mrs. Tibbetts strode through the house. Duer was the quickest to respond.

David and Lois were alone.

The brief packed hour had stirred the early world of David, had made it glow again. Their spirits had been high together. Now, somehow, they sat in gloom. They realized that in their lightness there had been combat. Looking at each other, they felt the burden of those below advancing heavily upon them.

"Why do you love Fay so much?"

"Because she's a dear." Lois was not on the defensive because of Fay. She had more intelligence than her answer. She deemed the question worthy of no better. She sought the solace of a different subject.

David kept silent, and looked at Lois and thought of Fay.

He saw Fay quite clearly. Fay was dark, regular of feature, beautiful even. Her face was hard. It had none of the free loveliness of sixteen years. It roused in David passion more nearly than affection, the need to dominate rather than to help. David saw her straight mouth, her veiled eyes, the squareness of her forehead: he tried to remember that she had laughed and joked with Lois, was delightful snubbing



## THE DARK MOTHER

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her solemn brother. Her lively brightness seemed strange to her immobile face.

"Besides, Lois is her chum, and look at Lois!" he argued with himself and he looked. He knew that her tenderness was like an early yellow violet. He set aside his first forbidding instinct about Fay. He forgot it, altogether. . . .

In contemplation of each other, these two were like two worlds, each with its atmosphere and its teeming life and its fires, each with its intense exclusive consciousness, thrust suddenly close out of the silences of Space. They felt the indefeasible Past that summed their difference: its involute progression of separate thought and deed reaching from the mist of their beginnings. They were separate: Nothing was between them. Yet they were being drawn together.

When Lois came down to breakfast, David was gone. There was just time to kiss her father as he trudged back into the dining room, hatted and overcoated, smoking hard at the day's first cigar. Mr. Deane's true genius for system was at work even at half past eight. When he reached his train at Fiftieth Street, his cigar was done. It was a smaller cigar than he smoked later in the day.

"Well, good-by." He stood in the doorway. Lois jumped from her chair and threw her arms about his neck and kissed him. She loved her father. It was somewhat a maternal love. She knew that he was rather the defensive and serviceable member of the household.

One day, she visited her father at his offices downtown. She walked a bit fastidiously through the murky sales-department on the ground floor where the bright yellow oak and the beveled glass and the shadows under long tables depressed her. She saw men moving about in shirt-sleeves: grimy boys that ambled in and out of doors whose jaws seemed busier with gum than their slack minds with business. They led her to a spiral iron stair through whose slatted steps she could

see the bowed heads below of men at desks and women bent over papers. It had appeared to her first that this was a hostile world, she was frightened to have come upon it.

On the narrow steps, she gave way to a girl—not much older than herself in years—but very old as if she lived in a harder world than Lois, a world that wore one more away, that sapped the flower of cheeks and the laughter of eyes and parched the bloom of a girl's hair. She noticed all this, stepping aside so that the girl might pass. She moved, apologetic, fearful, strangely ashamed. She saw the hard paper cylinders serving this girl as sleeves. In the lifeless golden hair she saw that a pencil was stuck. She felt guilt. But Lois had no power to plumb her impulse: it went. She was in her father's private office and a new pride swiftly scurried away the mist of that strange encounter.

Here—she felt it at once—here her father was master! A new light by which to see him.

At home her mother ruled him. Muriel flouted him when he obtruded upon the most idle of her ways. He seemed glad, as of a privilege, to hold Lois on his knees, after Sunday breakfast, and spoil her with promises of trinkets, bribing for kisses and smiles. Also, at home he was weary, a depleted man. He had little ways of confessing his weakness and although Lois was not so analytic as to gauge them consciously, their accumulation brought its impress to her mind. He lost his temper. He bore treading on, was silent, then suddenly he lost his temper. He cried aloud about his power, that his will was final: *he* was the head of the household: not Muriel, not Muriel—*he*. Lois felt the whisper against these over-protestations.

Here was a party to which a not too well established youth had invited Muriel. The youth was calling for her in a carriage himself had hired.

"You aren't going in that carriage," said Mr. Deane.

Muriel was struck silent. She retreated before the sudden quiet of his authority. Slowly gathering herself, she matched him.

"And why not, please?" Her voice was compressed in her throat.

"Why not?" her father burst forth. "Because I don't want you to. I don't allow any young whippersnapper who wants, to take my daughter in a hired carriage. We have a carriage of our own, haven't we? Isn't it good enough? Send your young man a message to countermand his rig and you may go."

Muriel stood there, swaying a bit, lowering on him.

"I'll do no such thing. Make him think I'm a child who can't go out in any carriage but my Papa's? The whole thing is too silly——"

"Very well. Then stay at home."

Muriel broke into tears.

"I won't," she cried. "I'll go. I never heard of such a thing. It's stupid. What have you got all of a sudden against Alfred? Why should you ask me to insult him so? If he prefers to order his own cab . . ."

She stood there and wept and moved not at all, save for the stamping of her feet. Her father paced the room, far less contained.

"I have said what I meant." Stopping short, he joined the issue. "And you will obey. So long as you are in my house, I am to be obeyed, do you hear? You ain't married yet."

He left the room. Muriel went to the dance in her father's carriage. But Lois knew how clearly, in the light of the ensuing days, the victory was with her sister. Muriel kept aloof, frigid. She waged a perpetual *guerilla* on her father. Soon he began to bribe and to cajole for a return to favor. He bought her an armlet she had several months ago expressed the wish for. He had said it was too expensive. "Out of the question." He took her to theater with a strained

gusto of good will and to supper after. He spoke to her with a nervous smile that exclaimed his suppli-ance. And Muriel accepted all, gave nothing. She wore his armlet and in no way acknowledged the life and feeling of the harried man who waited for thanks as for a reprieve. On his return each evening to his house, she managed some little way to hold him frozen in discomfort. On the occasion of another dance, he said:

"Muriel, my dear—I just wanted to know—are you using the carriage to-night, or is your escort taking care of that? I just wanted to know, you see—because if so, I might use Henry myself. There's a conference I——"

"I have made no other arrangements."

"Oh, well, that is all right, my dear. I can get a cab. I—I just wanted to know, you see. . . ."

Having completely and ignominiously surrendered, he beamed at his daughter. Muriel smiled back.

Here: Lois was ensconced in a deep armchair of bronzed leather. She was examining her little feet that lay in a rich Turkish rug. A knock at the door.

"Come in," said her father without looking up.

A young man, the symbol of subservience, stepped in.

He placed a group of papers before Mr. Deane, who did not look at him. He stepped back, threw up his head and waited.

Mr. Deane raced through the papers. He marked annotations. He grunted.

"You'll have to see Mr. McGill about this": the young man agilely stepped forward to ascertain which paper it was, and agilely subsided. "All right. Let Mr. Marton attend to the tax."

He returned the papers to the young man, for the first time saw him.

"Here," he smiled. "Why don't you two greet each other?"

Duer Tibbetts moved jerkily forward and took his cousin's hand. But the bondage of the room's authority was strong on him. He seemed weighed down by this sense of special dispensation. Social talk was impossible in the august presence. He was soon gone.

Another five minutes of chat, another knock. This time a girl appeared with papers. The same subdued alertness, the same gingerly respect. Mr. Deane pressed a button. A boy bobbed in.

"Take Miss Deane to her carriage." The boy fell back as if to flatten himself into the wall, while she passed him. Her father got up.

"Well, my dear. I am afraid I am too busy now"; in this splendid easy manner he dismissed her. . . .

This transfiguration of her father into a man of power was a sharp new knowledge. But in the more persuasive color of her home, its lines grew faint. It soon withdrew into the limbo of things remote, scarce real, hence scarce remembered. It had little application to her world uptown. In consequence, it had no effect.

Lois left school in time for lunch. It was to be her last year at school. The lunches would go on.

Seated at the wide round table with Muriel and her mother, she instinctively inquired into her own future freedom: and in this mood studied them. She studied their dress; she studied their activities. She absorbed their judgments and their pleasures.

She was sixteen. A spirit of gayety and candor danced in her heart. But she had no knowledge to build a mansion for it: to train and cherish it: to give it weapons wherewith to confront the world. It was dancing, this unblemished spirit, dancing itself to death. For it was daughter of the sun, and it breathed no fresh air: it had been born careless and frail

and all about it walls of convention: it was starved and forced to feed upon itself.

"I promised to go and have tea with poor Mrs. Dent."

"Since when," asked Muriel, "is Mrs. Dent 'poor'?"

"Don't you remember she has just lost her husband?"

"Oh, yes." Muriel remembers.

Her mother goes on. "Do you think, dear, you can drop me there on your way to the Selby's?"

"I don't really see how I'll have time, Mamma. I must take a rest after lunch. I promised to call for Aline King."

"Can't Aline get there without you?"

"I promised her, Mamma."

Mrs. Deane will take the street-car. She does not like to squander money on cabs.

"You haven't forgotten that you are going shopping with me, to-morrow morning. You promised me."

"I saw just the loveliest hat, just to-day, Mamma, at Bertrande's. I am having it sent home to you. I'm sure it will suit you. Then, we needn't go shopping. I must write to Clarice sometime. I thought I'd sleep late to-morrow and write before lunch. She is getting a divorce, you know."

Lois knew already the inwardness of marriage. There was much talk of this at the luncheon table. She had the right contempt for the girls who married unmoneyed men for love: for the men who risked their future—their finances—in alliance with unmoneyed girls: and for the novels she read where love was extolled and the sentimental match defended. These books were—well—for reading. Novels and stories were indulgences like red and emerald peppermints after dessert. They lied.

And Lois knew already the inwardness of friendship. Muriel and her mother had friends. They kissed them and flattered them and entertained them. At the luncheon table they discussed them. No one but was a tissue of deceptions, of selfish-

ness, of deceit. Their morals were largely obstacles they were forever dodging. They flirted—with fops or fools. They angled—for goldfish. They were miserable at home. One was none too anxious to have children. One was none too faithful to her husband. All of them were none too good at all.

Immediately after lunch, Florence was to call for Muriel and take her for a walk. Florence was violently trying to win the King boy whose father had nearly a million. But it was hopeless because Mabel—mutual friend—had told Muriel all about it and *she* was secretly engaged to Clifford King. Oh, Aline wouldn't know! Clifford was bored by Aline. Muriel and Mabel had had a good laugh over Florence—poor child—such antics.

"She really loves him, you know." Muriel smiles complacently. This is an interesting if somewhat superfluous detail in her wish to wed him. Mrs. Deane nods, mildly concerned.

Later: "Hello, Florence dearest. I was so afraid you'd be late. . . ."

Indeed, Lois knew already the inwardness of life. Life was, in the patriarchal term, a "business proposition." Out of the arcana of the past her intellect could summon the picture of a free land peopled by striving men and women. This land was America. Its freedom meant the opportunity of all "to get along": to become rich. Men achieved this in business, women in marriage. The sublime distinction of America was that no castes interfered with business, and no classes with marriage. . . . Sharply there emerged from this hallowed field one man and one woman. The man was her father. He had grown rich by being quick and clever. The woman was her mother. She had grown rich by being sensible, by seizing her chance. Romance in their lives was a hidden function, if it existed at all. It was bound up with the mysteries of birth and sex. These things took care of themselves.

The important thing for Lois, since she was a woman, lay



in the need of being sensible. Lois knew what this meant. She knew as well the proportional insignificance of her own girlish impulses. Lois loved to play, loved to be loyal to a friend, would have loved to love a man. But these were part of her childhood, and childhood was a special state. Its needs were indulgences one must outgrow. Childhood was of the same dim category as art and stories. It wasn't true. It was "make-believe." It lied. Muriel had already cast it aside like her short dresses. Lois was aware she was carrying it a bit too far and too long. She was sixteen and in ankle skirts and her braids were already gathered on her head. She deemed herself brave and a trifle foolish to be so frolicsome at sixteen. She was unswervingly confident of knowing how to change at the needed moment. Meanwhile, she felt herself slightly inferior in the things that held her and in the moods she loved. The rule of life was to harden the present into a mold for the future. Yet Lois could not resist pouring herself still into immediate and short-lived moments: giving herself to emotions that must have no future. The gay spirit still danced fast. Inexorably, from without, the things she learned bore inward, seeped downward, stifled the things she had merely always felt. Her acquired consciousness was a slow acid mist that would eat away the stir and laughter of her birth. The gay spirit danced fast, though it was dancing to death.

All this was Lois. All this was drawing, with her and in her, near to David. With David the stalwart muteness of the years that inclosed him with his mother: the sting and the song of his father: the drowsy stir of the Town not yet awakened, not yet awakened to its death in the crash of the industrial Age.

Two little teeming worlds, spying each other, craving each other across the Nothing. . . .

David and Thomas Rennard had agreed on an evening by

letter. They were going to dine together, and then to theater. Tom waited in the lights of a Broadway chop-house.

He would not know the man he met: this he knew. He stood quite still and gauged the crowds. The heavy strokes of their passing fell against his measured life. They separated him as he stood there from the thoughts and fruits of his growing. Tom stood graceful and free as few men do. His weight was equal on both feet: his arms were unpropped: his back curved subtly in rhythm with his head. Only in the faint peer of his eyes was there defect. Tom was nearsighted. He did not admit this. He wore no glasses, despite the advice of doctors. His best friends had no inkling that when he recognized them, distant, on the street, it was not by sight of their features but by knowledge of the accents of their walk.

The crowds flayed him with dull black strokes and Tom was separate from his first months in the City. He twined this with thoughts of David. It was different of course. David must have found a ready welcome in the house of his uncle. Tom knew of Anthony Deane: his name was that of a big-hearted, well-liked merchant. Tom had come with no reception, no one to remake and to keep him. He thought of a stone fallen in a wind-shattered sea, how it sank with no slightest added tremor of wave and no sign from the swinging heavens. He knew what the City had done upon him. The terracing steel had rivetted his eyes and writhed him. The clamor of this world had soon enticed him from the call of his old thoughts. Old dreams were outrun by the faëry of the City.

He stood naked there, and emptied among millions. Cornelia was distant with her cold hand in his. But he was more alive than he had been. He knew this, because his nudity was not stark. It was encased in a great trembling. It was cold with a great hunger for warmth. A fire of will stirred in him: darted from him out and became vision among the millions.

He had seen. He saw that these millions also were naked and forlorn from themselves. No one was at home in the City: no one was himself in the City! Tom had found himself smiling, known himself strong. He was naked no longer. *He was clothed in the knowledge of the nakedness of others.* . . . At once he had looked at his hands and found money. He prospered. But Tom knew that this light from within himself which played about among the darkness of men and brought him the strength of knowledge could not go forth from him and stay in him as well. When it was away, outside, doing his work Success, he was unlit himself.

Would he find David still shivering in his new nakedness? Tom remembered the distinction between them.

"No," he said aloud: "he'll be thinking there's darkness and confusion all about, in the blinding glare of his own light. And blaming it all on himself."

He winced, suddenly finding it cold. The dark pupils of his eyes distended, the mouth drew downward over the lower lip, the skin was taut on his cheek-bones. Then a recovering spark in his eyes illumed their warm particles of bistre, the defiant smile of his mouth pointed upward.

The lamps of the restaurant façade fell over Tom and bathed him. He had the sudden pain of feeling himself a black spot in warm blaze. He moved aside to shadow. He stepped out, and grasped David's hand.

A coachman stood at the corner beside his horse. Idly he flapped his arms—a habit caught from the cold winters—against the musty broadcloth of his coat. He saw the two young men in the light. Their profiles were sharp. An eager alert young man and a drowsy one, passive before him. A clear laugh and a muffled laugh that followed always. The coachman turned to his horse: "Well, young feller, have some oats?" He prodded his soft nose. The other two were gone.



Three houses stood far separate in the City. The house of the Deanes where the old world of David dissolved into a frantic chaos: the house of the Company in whose gathered fires his new world formed from the running welter: the house on whose top floor lived Thomas Rennard. These houses threw a vivid stirring like the glow of lamps. The spheres of their activity converged. As they burned and moved, a myriad other burnings rose and met them, intermingled and transfused them. A single light, drenching the City. It fell like an eye upon these two talking: it fell with the same singleness upon each spot where men and women were, where men and women loved. From each spot came a glow, from the myriad glows rose back again the transfusing fire, deeper than consciousness, more real than the separate lives which fueled it, as the glow of coal is deeper and more real than the black coal itself. But through the brightness was a vibrancy: and where David and Tom sat, had they been wise enough to follow its receding lines, their vision must have reached back to the three houses. From other spots the grain of the light traced back to other sources. From these sources forth again to farther ones. . . . To a white cottage in the Eastern village, to the leaning plains of Ohio. Thence again away to beneath the hearts of two dead women stirring there, quiet—still—once more outward—perhaps to find each other behind the sun. Close, there: and here at the chop-house table seeking to be close.

David and Tom, together, were not on Broadway but at Cornelia's studio. The studio had swung to place under their feet; Broadway lurched on, the footing of others.

Cornelia had not mentioned again her wish to meet Tom's new friend. It was not necessary. The relation between them was too intimate for that. Tom knew when she was thinking of this: Cornelia knew when Tom had understood her.

"Well, how was the dinner, brother?"

"Are you busy next Sunday afternoon?"

"No."

"I told Markand you were anxious to meet him. He is in a state of perturbation I hope won't interfere with his royal job of clerking."

"Oh, I am glad. But how was the dinner?"

"You are the first artist he will have met. I have told him about us. Cornelia, you must wear something brighter than that Russian thing. Will you? The sandals will do. Stockings under them, however. A little more air in the meshes of your hair. Yes? Why not that green silk blouse with the orange smocking. I want him to see you're an artist in some outward visible sign."

"And the work——?" Cornelia looked at her clays.

"I am afraid he is not quite up to these."

"Oh, nonsense, Tom!" His sister turned on her couch, her favorite seat. She tucked a foot beneath her and laughed. "To hear you talk, one would think the boy was dull—or that my art was inscrutably profound."

"He's not dull. I was amazed last night. . . ."

"At last, the dinner!"

"I was amazed at the bright muddle he's in. I tell you, he's inquiring and inquiring. It's glorious! He told me the Spanish-Cuban question was not a mere matter of relief for the *reconcentrados*! 'There's something else beside Principle,' he announced."

"Whereupon, I am sure, you added: 'The same's true of the Monroe Doctrine.'"

"If I had, it would have shocked him. I did not. His new searching eye has not yet reached that sacrosanct past. I was in no mood to startle him, Cornelia. I felt different. I like David Markand. I respect him. What if he has the usual illusions? In his soul, they are no longer the smug

knock-kneed lies I hate. They become true: at least, beautiful. My facts seem shoddy and ugly—and lying, in the warm glow of his faith."

They were silent both. Tom did not often speak so tenderly.

"Wait and see," he concluded.

"I see already," said his sister.

So David came.

He was to leave at once after the Sunday dinner: push his way through the depleted Sabbath City: he was to ring the bell on the brass-plate marked *Rennard*, come up three dusty stairs and find them waiting through the door that made two worlds of the black hall and the bright room.

"I am so glad to see you!" Cornelia had him at once in hand. He looked very tall beside her sharp slighthness. She took his hat and his coat.

"Do sit down." David was anxious to look everywhere about him, to touch all these mysteries with the warmth of his eyes so that they might be cold and strange no longer. He did not quite dare. He kept looking near Cornelia: then, with still greater ease, toward Tom. In this his sensitivity was clear. A glance was an intimate gesture, a visit, to David. He could not comfortably look at what he did not already comfortably know.

"Tom has told me not half enough about you. Just enough," she smiled, "to make me know it was not half enough."

Tom apprehensively tested his new friend. His gladness at seeing David understand Cornelia released his worry into laughter.

"Oh," said David, "it is just the same in my case with what Mr. Rennard has said about you." He looked at the little cast between the windows and blushed: he folded his hands and looked at them.

Tom remained silent. There was no need of talking: and

although he talked much it was deeply true that Tom talked only when he had need of talking. He was comfortable now. He lit a cigarette, and lay prone, propped by his arms, on the window-seat; he let the conversation of the two go over him and smoked.

"You know," Cornelia said, "we are not New Yorkers either."

David met her eyes. "Your brother told me about how you ran away."

Cornelia was silent. What could she say to swell the room's slow freedom?

"My case"—David went on—"I am so different. I always lived with my mother and then she died. And then my uncle took me—took me really in charge. That is why I came. I have never done anything because I wanted to, really—that I can remember. Except perhaps work in the bicycle shop. Mother wanted me to stay longer at school. But—" he looked at his hands again and stopped, then met Cornelia squarely with a smile, "the truth is mother said to me: 'Do as you please, son.' And—and I was bored by school. My best friend, Jay Leamy—he worked at Mr. Devitt's also."

"You never told me that," said Tom.

"He didn't stay my best friend. I guess that's why. I guess I was a better friend than he."

"What makes you say that?" asked Cornelia.

"Well—it was natural. He was ten years older than I. He got married. He got a better job at the Arms factory just outside Town. We didn't see each other so much after that. He sort of lost interest."

Cornelia laughed. "I think that's a little hard!" She did not want this word. She was sure "hard" was an ultimate wrong word for David Markand. She was vague in her mis-giving. "Probably, his wife and—he had children? Well, they must have left him far less time."

"It is not a question of time, is friendship?" David asked.

"Well, left him far less——" Why did Cornelia find this difficult? "Less *emotion* perhaps. I can understand that. With a wife and children."

"It would not have made any difference with me," said David simply.

Tom was leaning over. "Perhaps you don't know what it means to have a wife and children."

"I know what it ought to mean to have a friend."

"Are you sure?" said Tom.

"After we had shared so many thoughts, don't you see?"

"You must be capable of deep friendship," Cornelia thought aloud.

Tom was somehow crossed by her remark. He lay back once more, brooding. The talk was easy now between the other two. So easy that even silence did not disquiet them. Tom seemed far away.

Out of a silence, David asked: "Is that sort of friendship rare?"

Cornelia, not knowing, did not answer.

"If it is rare," said Tom, "there must be something wrong with it."

"What do you mean?"

"The good things in the world are common. Sunlight: moonlight."

"Mother and I were that sort of friends," said David.

"I hope Tom and I are also," laughed Cornelia.

David looked at her close. She was a woman who made beautiful things. That was her life. It seemed to David she was not so very different from many women he had known who were nothing but mothers. She was not pretty. It never occurred to David that she could be less than beautiful. So he accepted her.

A vague questioning flew through his mind like a scarf of



cloud: Were things in the world that had different names so different after all? Artists and mothers, friends and mothers, sunlight and mothers. . . . The questioning faded.

It was good in this room.

Cornelia felt the trace of his mood on her flesh, found a warm pleasure in talk with this earnest boy whose mind could touch truth without the stiff proddings of the clever. It seemed to Cornelia that David was steadfastly strong like a tree.

Tom jumped out of his smoky silence and brewed coffee. They threw cushions on the floor. They laughed a bit at David's awkwardness at squatting. These shadows in the room were good. Tom came forward now. The ease of his revery and of his listening had distilled some new disquiet. He needed to get at David.

He would have said: "How little this boy knows himself! What passion lies behind this dream of friendship! What will the world do when he goes asking impossible treasures?" The thought gave him worry. He would have said: "The City will not make him. Thanks for that. But break him, break him, perhaps." The fear made him urgent: David must be flexible with his terrible strength. His spoken words were: "I am reminded of a story——"

"There was a man." Tom did not know what he was going to say. His head swam. He was suddenly tired and full of power. He wanted, not sleep, but dream—— "who loved his friend. This man loved his friend and a woman came into his life whom he loved also. He asked for her in marriage, she gave her promise. So he went to his friend and told him. And the friend cried: 'Do not wed her. Remain with me!' And the man said: 'I love this woman but you are my friend. I remain with you.' He dismissed the woman whom he loved.

"Now, thereafter, all was sorrow in the home of the man and his friend. One night as the man slept an angel came to him. The angel said: 'Thou who art so loyal to thy friend,

name a wish and it is granted.' The man, half-unknown to himself, cried out: 'Make a miracle! Make one my friend and my lover. Then I may be loyal and yet be happy.' The angel smiled. 'So it is already.' The angel disappeared."

Tom paused. A sudden discomfort came upon his face. He rushed back to his tale as to haven: ". . . at once the man awoke. He found himself in his bed. He remembered the angel's visitation. He believed it. He ran to the sleeping chamber of his friend, expecting to behold a miracle. It was his friend, his unchanged friend who slept there. The man cursed and smote his breast. Then a great light came to him. He understood. He returned, both loyal and happy."

David sat there.

This Cornelia understood. Tom was on one of his moody jaunts and away. She had sat there watching as a girl on a fence might watch a horseman gallop past in dust and hoof-thud. She recoiled as he swung in too near.

Tom laughed. "Come! You need some more coffee," to David. "You are half asleep. I can't get along without coffee. Can you? The world is so much a dream, one's sense of fitness makes one go to sleep beholding it. I find I can do endless work, with endless cups of coffee. I wonder who invented coffee. A shame, isn't it, that the true benefactors of the human race are nameless. The Gods tied Prometheus to a rock and set a vulture on him, for giving us fire. The other saviors of life they have made nameless."

He skipped nimbly from parable to fun: from apostrophe to laughter. David found himself loving the mere exercise of following his new friend. It was like a cross-country run with an agile pathman. Over brook and rock he tried to leap with him. No time to look and to consider. The way was nothing, the leaping everything.

The story was forgotten. It was shivered away in the pelt of Tom's succeeding words.

Cornelia was silent. She was pensive. She had stopped listening to Tom. When he went galloping like this, he was running away from something deep in himself. She knew. He would take this thing within him he needed to escape and toss it far and rush after it. Let him rush.

There was David laughing. Tom no longer needed to smoke cigarettes. David was glowing near his finger-tips.

Coffee was gone. Night had come up from the street like incense of incantation. It curled its way into the room, it subdued the flame of the room to a warm ash.

Tom lighted a lamp. No one spoke. A golden ray filtered about the table. It left them in shadows. David got up to leave.

"I was so happy to be here," he said.

Cornelia clasped his hand deeply in her own. It was warm. She found it hard to speak. "Boy!" her heart sang to him. She managed to say: "You must come soon again." . . . "And again and again." Her heart had the last word.

Tom took David down through the dark halls where gas-jets shivered like imprisoned birds. He was not happy with this last silence of Cornelia. It was as if she had said: "Why do you bring a guest here and then insult him and not let him even know that this is what you have done?"

His eyes were hot, the hand that took David's was cold.

"Good-by," he said, "I hope we are going to be—friends?"

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed David. . . .

David walked under swaying houses. They were aburst with broken flame. He walked among scattered men and women driven with unbelieving will and eyes unseeing toward these fires—toward fires that meant love to them and warmth. It was the evening before work: the breach in the dull circle of toil. Hearts were released. Blood surged in vain encouragement through the habit-hardened lives of the workers. Men and women were floods of longing torrenting the streets.

. . . David walked under the spread wings of his own sweet mood. Life was full. Full of the play of voices and of bodies: full of adventure. Life was the mystery of finding. . . .

No one else was at home, that evening. Anne brought early tea to Lois and to David.

"It is *our* house to-night," Lois was playful.

A strange exhilaration still sang and worked in him. He looked at the girl who had shared those sweltering nights: he looked at Lois flattering his new ease. It all seemed right to David. It was right that Anne had been there to take. He smiled on her masterfully. The girl was fearful lest the young Miss understand. But we can bring to our minds through intuition only such thoughts our minds have words for. The remote amour was an unthought-of, an impossible thing to Lois. Anne's own senses, feeling this as they groped forward, again came to rest.

She waited on them with a sweet dignity. It was so plain she was a woman. A woman was a creature whose life was nourished by herself. A creature free of the world. David felt this, as they sat munching at table. It was the quiet serving girl who made him think of woman. With her blood she nurtured. In her womb, at her breast, with her hands, forever her own mute spirit giving men food. Woman was the true master of life: the sourceless god.

David looked at Lois. A faint chill went through him. It seemed to him that Lois was not quite woman. She was less herself, than this waiting servant. He felt her need of sustenance, her lack in this of godhood.

Anne helped her to cake. There she was cutting the cake, simply—sublimely? Lois was above the table like a flower. He thought of the strength of Anne's abandon: of the wise strength of her withdrawal. Wisdom and strength—for him! Cornelia came also. She, too, was more woman. Already

there was lodged the seed of dissolution in his heart for Lois, before the climax of his caring.

Upstairs, he went far toward it. Lois' arm was about him, the air of her body stabbed his blood: he forgot his comparisons. He was quite sure he loved Lois. They sat so close together, and often she placed her cheek against his lips. He saw the fine tautness of her body hiding beneath the flimsy frock it wore. He desired her body. He desired to break its tautness.

"Is it wrong, Lois dear, to love one's cousin? Because I love you very much."

"It is extremely proper."

A fire had been fanned in him that afternoon: fanned by Cornelia. It burned for Lois.

He viced her shoulders in his hands and looked at her, as one stiffens before a leap. His hands slipped upward to her head. The thrill of her skin and her flesh flowed through his hands like blood. He held her face. He wanted to tell her how he loved her. His own face came nearer, it was like a death and a birth: a frenzy of change.

She thrust her head downward, his mouth sank in the mesh of her hair behind her ear.

He was panting. "Why don't you let me kiss you—as I *must?*"

Lois withdrew her body. Her mood was not changed.

"Don't be silly, David. I can't let you kiss me, that way."

He was silent. He did not gainsay her. He wanted to hide his face. Something started up in his breast and beat against his breathing, hurt him.

Not the denial of the kiss. It was the sudden pierce of her insensitiveness. She had not cared to understand how he cared for her. And when he had longed for her mouth, her mood had not changed!

If only it had! If only she had been moved—though it was in denial.

He had at times believed he saw her little body stir with passion when he was near her. But so faintly, so containedly. Never a doubt of her control. Something she tasted in exquisite moderation and enjoyed. In her denial she was cool. It was as if her hunger for a closer kiss were a question answered in her catechism: one she knew all about: one she had learned the answer of by rote.

There she was smiling, chatting. She had already forgotten. He looked away and heard the mutterings of his pain that she could be smiling, chatting.

With dull head David went to his work.

He loved Lois and rebelled against his love. She gave him no ground on which to hate her. Always his love was watching, watching for a pause in which to whisper: "See? You do her injustice. She is not hard and flippant. She is young and unknowing. She does not feel a deeper love. How much sun can a bud hold in its tight petals?"

She was not different. She sought him out. She allowed him no escape. One day, she said:

"Why don't you kiss me any more?"

David took her hand and kissed that, tenderly, hopelessly. Lois laughed. She thought he was teasing her. She fell in with his little game.

Work was already a tune David knew by heart. Fortunately, since his head was dull. The year approached its scintillant climax. And David's head was dull and his heart was heavy.

One bitter cold day he stepped out for his lunch.

When he could he lunched alone. It was a problem of avoiding Duer Tibbetts whom he emphatically did not like, but who went on blandly liking David. It surprised David

how little his own attitude and his inner mood affected his relations with that blossoming gentleman of affairs. It was almost as if, in the reality of their business and family connections, so slight a thing as personal taste must fade away, did not count. He had often lunched with other boys in the office—the sort who Duer said were not “their sort.” He liked them, until he began in this very approach to have discomfort in their friendship. Since the bursting of his wound with Lois he sought to be alone. He was equally surprised by the sensitive response of these others. They felt his aloofness in the office: they honored it. They were different indeed from Duer.

He walked toward the cluttered food-pen where the waitresses sweated visibly at the arm-pits. Here lunch cost him only twenty cents. The place was at least clean, and the food good. The eggs for instance, and the butter—details that meant much for David. He sat huddled at a long porcelain board. From whirling waitresses in white the dishes fell with clamorous approximation near his place. In the rear was an endless catatonic beat of crockery and voices. The whole place roared like the shatter of a mighty loom that wove the calls of women into the brittle shower of china, the glint of knives into the shuffle of feet. David sat and took his food and held his big arms tight to his body. The fresh air as he left gave him the cumulated picture.

This day he heard a clear voice at his side speak his name in the cold street.

He turned: there was Miss Lord.

Caroline Lord held a higher place in Deane and Company than any other woman. These were days before the spread of advertising agents. Miss Lord was in charge of the correspondence department. She had a little office of her own, and a male assistant and a stenographer. She was known as a remarkable woman.

"How do you do, Mr. Markand?" She had evidently overtaken David and now they were walking together.

He saw her casually in and out of the long packed room where David fumbled figures and papers. She was a remote business detail of this still strange world. One day, Tibbetts dragged him into her little office and introduced him. He remembered the way she sat on her desk and chatted cannily and bit at a pencil. The smile of her white teeth was beyond the reach of David's comfort. He was glad to get away.

Here she was being affable again.

"I presume you were going to lunch, Mr. Markand?"

He noticed that she kept step with him. She was a big and capable woman.

"Y—yes," he admitted.

"Do you like your work? Perhaps you are tired at night. Am I right? Oh, never worry about that. When you get used—more used to it, it will take less out of you."

They had passed his eating place. What should he do? He began cursing himself. It was so wide in him that he did not want to invite her to lunch. In her, that this was precisely what she expected. He was a reed before her silent pressure. There she was talking, as if they had an hour to be together.

"We were up on the Palisades last Sunday. You must really have some of your friends take you——" David fumbled in his pocket. His fare downtown that morning had broken his last dollar. He had a way of not keeping much of his money with him. It seemed a risky thing to do in a wild City. His pocket held ninety-five cents! Lunch for two at a decent restaurant was a catastrophe that simply could not be! She was trudging along: subtly pushing him toward Broadway. The lunch-places of the rich were near.

"Doubtless you have a lunch engagement . . . ?"



"No. But. . . ." He stopped, she stopped. He blushed and she smiled.

"No? Well then, we might have a bite together."

Why could he never lie? How he despised himself!

"I—I can't, Miss Lord. I have only ninety-five cents."

He felt naked before her. A lady should blush and go away when one stood naked before her. There was Miss Lord laughing: swinging her weight back joyously on one heel the better to observe him.

"Oh, isn't it always a joke when we find ourselves short? I understand so well. Won't you be *my* guest, Mr. Markand?"

She tilted her head back. David noticed how small her bonnet was above the mass of her hair. "You know," she went on, "it was really my invitation after all."

"Oh—I—no—I." Her light mood was an added weight.

She was quick to understand and to redispense her forces. "Then you must permit me to lend you five dollars. There now. I'll be offended if you don't." She dug in her bag and held out a bill. "Why should you discriminate against a fellow?"

David paused long enough to try to see with what he thought her generous eyes the foolish panic he was in. He gathered himself. They both laughed. He took the bill.

"It is good of you," he said.

"And of you," she answered.

She was silent and meek while the waiter took the order. He was gone. She began.

She talked methodically. She chose her specific subject and cribbed him in it. It was plain that Caroline Lord detested vagueness and abhorred disorder. No wide fields to roam and to be lost in. Miss Lord was managing this lunch. Before long she bored him.

In the emptiness of this, he could retreat a bit and see her. She was a handsome woman. Her age was beyond David's

knowing. He would have called her new, rather than young. She was well-kept.

"I saw a play last night I am sure would have interested you. *The Blue Daisy*. Have you seen it?"

He said, No.

"Do you go to the theater much?"

He said, No, again.

Miss Lord followed her plan. She had a catalogue of non-essential subjects: art, politics, life:—the sort to be served at amicable luncheons. She had already done books.

"Why—it's the story of two brothers. Let me see, what is their name? *Daysplaings—Gass-tong* and *Rah-ool Daysplaings*. There's the eldest who has a beautiful estate in Normandy. The young one is sort of a poet, a dreamer, you know—wanders about, mostly with his brother's wife while——"

David knew he was going to hear the entire story. She was a handsome woman.

There were no curves in her face. Her chin was square and her mouth was straight. The poise of her forehead was straight and the look of her eyes was square.

"Well, you can imagine what happened then. But it didn't. The idea was there. That is bad enough. The husband was quite right, I think. . . ."

Miss Lord was a pattern of symmetry: a study in balance and rule.

Her body was not angular. She sat very straight in her chair. "Then, the curtain falls." She was tall, and sitting she topped David. "The way it was acted had a good deal to do. . . ." She came forward a little. Her hands were half shut and flanked her head. Her arms were two columns propping some splendid official building.

"Of course," she was saying, "that sort of thing seems to

be common in France. They're a decadent race, you know. Clever, though!"

Yes: her body was indeed not angular like her face. Her arms were ample. David could see the suggestion of flesh bursting the plain white sleeves. Her bosom was voluptuously full. Were these not feminine curves, these suave rounded masses? He felt the solidity of Miss Lord more somehow than her sex. Sex is an aura, not a form. Women understand this best. But a certain lack puzzled David. It was strange for him to sit so close to this lovely woman and not feel her lovely: to see her flawless and be unwarmed.

"'Oh,' the Irishman pointed, 'she's an Irish bull.'"

He should have laughed at this joke. He was full of the pain of Lois. Suddenly, he was thinking of Lois.

"And what do you say," it was the first question she had asked him in many minutes, "to Tammany's victory! After three years of splendid reconstruction?"

It was part of Miss Lord's program to discuss politics. Miss Lord was no "crank on women's rights," as she put it. That was too serious a view of the thing. Above all, or under all, she wanted you to know that she was a woman: she wanted you to treat her as a woman. But a strong, wise woman. One who could, unblushing, talk of adultery in a French play or of the degradation of a Tammany campaign.

"Why," David answered, "I don't know. I can't understand. If all these things were true about Tammany Hall. . . . There must be something else behind it all: some *reason* why Van Wyck was elected."

Miss Lord smiled. This was his opinion: a fledging's she could take with indulgence. She wanted no more of it. Now she could deliver her own. She started.

David was thinking of Lois. Little lovely Lois. Why must his mind fill so compellingly with Lois, when he lunched with Miss Lord?

"The thing is, you see, the people do not think. Catch-words and Sunday picnics win them over. Really, popular government——"

This woman. That girl. Could two creatures be more different? Why then the idea of a comparison. Did they have something, did they lack something in common?

". . . so far at least a failure."

Their ideas *were* one. Here was Miss Lord trying to conceal the impression that she earned her living: trying with might and main to be like Lois. An older, more settled, equally virginal Lois?

He half-closed his eyes. It did not matter. Such subtle things as eyes half-closed were beyond Miss Lord. Beyond Lois? He heard her voice. "The City had to pay ten cents a-piece for coat-hooks! A-piece! When you can buy them *anywhere* retail for a nickel." He heard her voice. It was so unlike her stalwart strapping body that he had not noticed it until now when his half-shut eyes saw less. Miss Lord's voice was high, was girlish! It too had that ring which, though David knew no such rule, goes with an emotionally empty life. Wise, cool Miss Lord. Did she have really more of the wine of feeling than pampered Lois? Was she more alive, after all?

She was earning her living. While Lois lolled at teas, and waited for her début. Earning one's bread—David knew what that meant, in the world. It meant the heights and the depths. It meant nobility. The man who earned his bread was a man: the man who did not was less than a woman. . . . Did it really mean these things?

He had earned his living since he was fifteen years old. For five years done this; for five years thought nothing about it, thought nothing about the world. That was strange. He had loafed three weeks near an idle lake and a world was born. Was earning one's bread perhaps a trick of the hand, like

placing the spokes in a wheel? What had the droning hours in the shop brought to him? Did he not go out into the breathing fields and watch his mind stir to expand? Until there had been three weeks of this and his mind had expanded. He liked work. Was it perhaps a trifle like a drug that one gets used to, that eases one off from the world? Here he was, juggling with steamship deliveries and tinkering accounts. Brainier work than welding handle-bars? Life could not be this. Perhaps this wise woman who earned her living did not know life after all.

At least, she did not know him. She had bored him: she was boring him now. David felt he knew her somewhat. He was not boring her. . . .

"It has been such fun, Mr. Markand. After all, we can't get along, can we, without fresh points of view? They mean success in business. Not plodding counts, you will find: always the fresh point of view. . . ."

Her judgments were cleaner-cut than his. A rubber-stamp is clear. What lay, in truth, behind the patter of her phrases: "France is corrupt but clever." "People vote according to picnics and catchwords." "After all, there is something *clean*, something *big* which America stands for, that no other country can rival"?

Lois also had her occupation. She received no salary for it: she was apprenticed to it still. She would get her place in the world, if she pursued it well. It too would mean money and ease and position. She too was going through a trick that was far from the free winds of living. Did not both these women belong to Deane and Company?

He loved Lois. He said to himself he loved her. This woman he did not love. So he saw her clearly. Let him swing this clear-seeing back into the dim place of his heart that hurt! It was impossible. He could not diminish Lois after all. The result of his effort was to dispose him more

pleasantly toward Miss Lord. Here he was smiling at her with a new attention that a less wise woman might have been wise enough to mistrust. . . .

He came away with a gnawing sense of doubt. He was heart-sick more deeply than ever. Miss Lord and his cousin were creatures of a single world. They performed different parts of a single service. Both of them were supposed to uphold the prestige of this system that made money and spent it: to submit to its standards of deed and thought, to further its dominions. For this, Miss Lord had her wages, Lois her keep.

*He too!* He too had been taken in for service! For service rendered he too would receive the means of sustaining life. David had seen a coat-of-arms heralding a strange device on the façade of a great commercial building. It had puzzled him. He had forgotten it. Now he recalled it and understood it. He marveled at its telling word. It had said: "Spend me and defend me."

A great fright was being born in David. . . .

V

TOM RENNARD and his sister stood under a house with a high straight stoop like a dozen alongside it. They looked up. Behind them their passing through Stuyvesant Square. The sky was very deep and warm on the moldering housetops, beyond the cool clouds. These skimmed their shadows across the Park's shut green. They threw small puffs of gray on the gleaming creepers of the Church. They dropped to the squat red meeting-house of the Friends and lightened its brick with their dark. They went westering over the bleak dense City.

"This is the number."

They mounted the stoop.

Each had a hand on the iron rail that rusted under crumbling paint.

A piercing rumble lay in the Park. Jangle of horse-cars, stir and laughter of children, the dry gasp of life hot over the Park from four dense sides, as over a cool well. And the Square merging with these the distances it caught on its church-steeple: hoot of river craft, gashes of dull speed echoing into sharpness as an elevated train passed through muffled houses. All of it funneled down the narrow eastward street that fell from the Square to the River: rose above the shoulders of these two: flattened back against the reticence of brownstone walls.

"Not a bad house," said Tom. "Relic of Knickerbocker glory. Some less brilliant Stuyvesant cousin may have lived in it once." He pulled a bell-handle: its call pierced and lingered

in the old mansion's depths. The house stood unmoved like a ventriloquist.

He turned. The sun was aflame in the Eastern windows. He faced the Park. Slow swarms of men and women crawling and scattering like bugs. These drew away his thoughts from the house and Cornelia. She stood laughing at the ornamented vestibule: its florid crimson plaster.

"Strange, isn't it?" she said. "When they tried to add beauty to their houses they made them hideous. Why is it? . . ."

Tom's new partner, Gilbert Lomney, who was a cousin of the President of the Fidelity Bank, who was a nephew of the General Manager of a great Railroad System, who was among the loyal stags of Mrs. Astor's balls, who was a fellow with no moral and no professional sense—he wondered how he was going to get along with him. He brought in business well enough. But Tom had misgivings. He thought about them now. Lomney's most brilliant feature was his glasses: his best achievement was his neckties. His glasses had a way of catching the sun whenever there was any sun around. His neckties were striped and of three colors. Without his glasses, Lomney was dull. Without his neckties, he would be naked. His eyes were flat. His complexion was habitually gray. About his mouth were the heavy lines, the puffing pucker that denote a sluggish kinetic system. One thing, to be sure: Lomney's head was long—what Tom knew to be a generous head. But he was not sure of the brows that seemed dissociate from his eyes. Well: this was his partner. That day there had been a rub in the office.

Lomney came in smiling in the morning.

"Rennard," he said, "is there no way of getting out of this contract cheaper than by paying the indemnity?"

"Why doesn't Murchison pay it? Good God! it's scarcely a mutual document at that!"



"Well, if he has to, he'll have less respect for us."

Both of them knew that Murchison could afford to be fair: that Sampson could not afford to be cheated. But, "It's not a question of that," said Lomney, "It's a question of how we are going to stand at 79 Broadway."

"Let's have all the facts—since the contract." Tom easily devised a plan. He had taken it to Lomney, who rejoiced.

"Come out to lunch, oh, Daniel!" He flourished a silver-headed cane.

"No, I've an engagement."

"Very well. Ta-ta. I'll not be back to-day."

Tom sulked at his lonely lunch. He did not mind the trick he had played for Lomney's client. But the unctuous pleasure of his partner was an ill thing to accept. It made him clear away his desk that afternoon with a fresh disgust: and be improperly amiable to Ladd, their abject clerk: and smile at Lomney's fizzle of a brief to be argued in the morning.

"Let him lose the damn motion, I'll win it back on appeal for him. More glory, more money——" Standing on the stoop, Tom saw and added: "—More satisfaction in having Lomney lose."

He went on, while his body waited: "Why should I be doing these clever things for the half benefit of Gilbert Lomney? Don't I know? I have the brains, but he has the pull and the people. Face it, man, it's the game."

He knew he would have to. There was little use in being clever at the Law save one could sell one's cleverness. There was little use in treasuring even in some mute corner of his soul the dream that ability, unorganized, was profitable. It could only spoil his humor: perhaps his chances. Some day, Lomney might find him lunching alone and think it queer. This above all must be avoided. Lomney had his Class's phobia for queerness. He would not have trusted Solomon in an outlandish cut of vest,

Coming this late afternoon to see his friend, Tom found the check on his tangents of mood abominably hard. He must take Lomney to his bosom and cherish him: as a man should another who was to multiply his power. . . .

Waiting made them pensive, forgetful. The doors of the vestibule sucked suddenly in. Cornelia and Tom gathered themselves with an alacrity determined by their recovery from its opposite. A woman was there. Her bare arms were folded: a gray apron spread across her body like a sooty mist over a fertile field.

As they stepped in they left the day. They entered another time. In the transition they were quick to both. It was September and hot. Beyond the bricks and the pavements, Indian Summer made the world glad. Trees waved in their new bright colors like flowers sprung up over night: earth was a-dance with insects, was leaping drunk from sharp liquors: air trilled with seeds for the next Spring. In New York heat was empty. Tom and Cornelia thought this. David also.

He sat upstairs in his room, looking over the Square.

Tom and Cornelia were out of the day and into the hall. About them the odor of endless passions, innumerable steps: the acerb sad odor of the lodging house. More lasting and more real it was than the lives of the creatures who came and who went. Here in this breath of the dark halls, their one permanence.

David had but recently moved in. The room was still somewhat strange to him: it was hard to rest in it, to rest asleep in it. Being with it stirred his nerves. The need of repose sent him to sitting in the Park. Also, he was still weary in the change from his vacation spent in the mountains with the Deanes. The first days of return had been dense ringing blows on the slumber of his nerves that were once more glad—glad as never before—in the free welcome of the woods. This was gone—gone echoing as David refitted to the City.

He was pensive, waiting for his friends to see his new room and take him to dinner.

He sat with his elbows on the base of the open window and was glad when the breeze touched his face. Also he was a little irritated when it fingered upward and threw his hair in his eyes. He had to move his hand to move his hair. Unwelcome. His mood was the immobile one in which the Past alone may move. The wind was the stir of the outer world, the world in which was his future and from whose moving he was momentarily apart.

It had been hard to leave the comfortable Deanes because they were so good to him and made him welcome and made him feel that he was theirs. It was a little easier to go, because of Lois. She held him suffering near to her, with her lips turned away. But the real reason of his going was a hidden spring that David could not name. He knew vaguely his going had to do with this same comfort which made his going hard. One quality held him, drove him. There was much to ponder in this, since, had he but known it, there was much of David in this. He needed to move on.

He found reasons for his impulse, worthy reasons that his aunt and uncle were the first to admire.

One morning in the mountains, sudden, he listened to his words: "Aunt and Uncle," he said, "don't you think I will be training better for an independent life if I learn to do without your dear hospitality?"

A ponderous sentence. It emptied David whose native tongue was rounded, poetic, simple. He stood ponderous and awkward like it, above his uncle.

Mr. Deane was in white flannels and a blazer coat that was almost unheard-of in America and had come blushing from London. It was red and yellow and purple: striped it was and flaring in front so as to leave way for the hospitable stomach. Mr. Deane sat curling his legs and peacefully tasting his cigar.

One difference in Mr. Deane on a vacation was his less unnerved way with his cigars. In the City he chewed them, in the country he smoked them. Mr. Deane was altogether a more delightful and more generous person. His little blue eyes looked larger as if they were more alive: his cheeks hung less heavy: his sparse hair was less awry. In particular, his voice was different, what he said. It came in less hectic bursts, less flurries of sudden release. His voice was almost an easy monotone. He could speak more on a single subject without wandering or strutting away. He could find more subjects on which to speak. In the City any family discussion left him somehow outside, though he himself had started it. His eyes stared away, he retired, he became abstracted. Soon he was forgotten. He sat there at the table, chewing his cigar, glassily looking inward. His brow furrowed moistly, his cheek-jowls had pleats like an old dog's. . . . But this Mr. Deane was alert and full of jests. Each afternoon, he trudged forth with Lois and David, grunting along a tree-swooned road to a distant woody place where he might ply them with candies and tea. He appeared in the morning, a racket in hand:

"Well, young man, are you ready to be beaten?"

And since David was a beginner at tennis, his uncle whipped him. He twisted his body into intricate designs, he served a high slow ball, surged forward with racket *en couche* like a spear or *en garde* like a shield. He laughed when Lois laughed from her bench, was happy in his 6-4 victory over David—far more happy, it seemed to David, than any business success had made him in the City.

The brief time her father was with her in the country, Lois escaped her friends. The pair played and chatted together: occasionally, she read him a story from one of the magazines or faced him over a card-table. And these activities, in which David joined on his own brief sojourn from work, went on

without the interest, almost without the notice of Muriel and Mrs. Deane.

Summer to them meant merely a transfer from the City of the business and paraphernalia of City life. "A change of air" was what they said, and what they actually meant. They were sure to go where the greatest number of their friends went also. Such activities and such relations as the summer brought of itself they disqualified before the more serious continuance of City social life. Of course Lois could not be spared: but she was far less tolerant with the free toss of the greenland and the glint of a lake to formulate her appetite for somewhat else. There seemed less excuse for her dapper friends and the conventions of pleasure, under the stars and out in the open breezes. Lois could not know that these enhanced her feeling for herself: that it was against this feeling the world so painfully grated.

The indifference of Muriel and Mrs. Deane was a delicious pretext for defiance. Not the least charm for Mr. Deane's spirited revival was this half-sheepish, half-crude flaunting of revolt into the proper faces of his wife and daughter. It was as if he said: "I have my own way of taking a vacation. You think it foolish. Doubtless it is. But it *is* a vacation."

Now, in this climax of ease and pleasure, something spiteful had to commence to stir in David, to spoil it all. Something that came with a new burst of feeling for Lois, with a new glow of comfort in this family that was so glad to have him.

There was no doubt of that. His aunt's note of a year ago had invited him to the house "until you find a comfortable and proper place for yourself in the City." By Spring he knew that they had put aside all thoughts of his leaving, and that his uncle had no doubts of his being able to "do" downtown.

The Spanish war burst, half frolic, half business, upon the country. In February the battleship "Maine" went down in Havana harbor. In March, the Inquiry Commission backed

the voices of papers and politicians shrilling for war, by its dubious decision that an outside mine had done the damage. Congress turned its trick of political revolution. President McKinley was swept from the saddle. His reservations were set at naught: his reluctances were negated to weakness. In April came the call for volunteers.

The crisis caught David in a tender mood. Stirrings of doubt concerning business and politics had died. This energy was being poured as fuel into the flame of Lois. As his energy bubbled up, there it went. There grew indifference for other things—for all things. Something in the casual technique of Lois kept the flame from spreading: sealed it in a tight place where it danced by itself, rather merrily than tragically: smartingly rather than to a sear. David went on with his affairs.

His weekly salary had been raised five dollars. He left off going to food-pens for luncheon. The spirit of earning more made him careless about spending. He came to find Miss Lord less noxious and took to asking her to an occasional meal. He went to theater, read novels, liked his Aunt Lauretta. He tried to keep clear of Lois: but after all the pleasure of her company was far more real than the pain. He saw the Rennards frequently: but their apart opinions stayed apart, they did not merge with him. His emotions and his nerves were a blind swirl within a rigid life.

Now, the call for volunteers. He was young and strong. Was it not his move to answer? He did not want to go. He was comfortable in his new indifference. Doubtless, the Cubans were not comfortable. But they were very far away.

He brought his problem to Tom. He did not know what he wanted of his question.

"Lord, man! Don't be a fool."

David had never seen his friend so moved, so angry, so

tenderly savage. Tom jumped from his seat and paced the room. His hands were fists.

"David," he stopped before him and spoke with a hot restraint, "I am ashamed of you. Why the Devil should *you* want to go to War?"

David was sprawling in a wide Morris chair. He curled up a little under this onslaught like a furry caterpillar.

"Who is to go, if unmarried fellows like myself are not?"

"Who is to go?" Tom blazed at him. "Who is to go? I'll tell you. Loafers who have nothing better to do. Men who are so miserable in their jobs they'd die for a chance to get away. Men who are so miserable in their homes they'll die if they can't get away. Unmarried, healthy men? The very last, I tell you. Let the sick of heart and the sick of life go first. They'll find the Cuban fever far more like a pleasant change."

"This is no time to be flippant."

"I am not flippant."

"Then you're—you're wrong. This is an unselfish war if ever there was one——" Tom's smile choked him. "Well, darn it: we're in it. We've got to see it through, however you may look at it."

David was sensitive enough to feel the deep concern which Tom's cynicisms covered. This was why he stopped his words of protestation. Strange unease came to him with the feeling. Tom wanted him to stay, to live. Why should he stir against his friend because of that? Tom stormed, making his friendship clearer, showing his affection warmer; David grew colder, less convinced, almost spitefully set against him.

He stood up. "Well," as if to make an end of an unbearable thing, "I think I am going to enlist."

A cloud went over Tom Rennard's face. It was gray, feverish. His hands fell out as if a current had crumpled them and gone.

"It is up to you," he said. David left. . . .

How unfair, how like a woman he had been! Why? Why did this brilliant warm-hearted comrade lead him into moods that were womanish and unfair? He had left Tom as if Tom had insulted him. Could he have left otherwise, if Tom had said: "By all means go. You're not worth saving."

It was strange. It brooded in David for several inactive days.

Tom sat long, fingering his hurt, with a cold smile wavering away. His mind reached back to the first afternoon of the three at Cornelia's studio: to the parable he had thrown off and that had had no sequel. Was this hostility of David's perhaps its sequel?

He stopped smiling.

"God send, at any rate, he doesn't go!"

And Tom did not believe in God. He believed in himself. The very following day he saw Mr. Deane in the latter's office.

Mr. Deane beamed on him. "I have heard a great deal of you, Mr. Rennard—from my nephew. What can I do for you?"

"Mr. Deane," Tom leaned forward in his chair. "You can't do anything material for me. I hope you will forgive what may seem the impertinence of this visit. . . . You know what interest I have in David. I am eager to know how he is getting on: what you think of his prospects. I have long wanted a few words with you on this subject."

Mr. Deane looked at the young lawyer quizzically, then in assurance.

"This won't get back to my nephew?" Tom waved his hand in deprecation. "You see, Mr. Rennard, I am afraid of conceit. Conceit spoils more careers than drink. My long experience has taught me that bright young men are what you might call perishable goods. I encourage them only *so* much.



But in your confidence I am glad to tell you that I have great hopes of David Markand."

Tom nodded seriously and held his silence. He knew this type of gentleman. Mr. Deane would presently go on. As he wandered further into the happy ways of his own conceits, he would be easier to manage.

"David has a good mind. He can work. He can apply himself. At first he was a little bewildered. He had a strange habit of asking my office manager a lot of foolish questions. I was afraid his mind was too much the wandering sort. But that's over. That was mere strangeness here. I knew that. I could afford to smile at my manager's worry. You see, Mr. Rennard, this is a personal organization. It's a family. I know how my men are, and the women also. They don't get into trouble in *this* business. We satisfy them: our kind hands are forever on them: no inducement to discontent or worry. And it pays. It's a way of keeping your machinery in good repair. Why, just the other day, one of our warehouse truckmen. . . ."

He forgot Tom. He prattled on. Tom saw he would have to stem him back at some convenient crossing. The War was broached.

"I think David has some idea of volunteering."

He said this casually, and peered sharp at Mr. Deane: saw the shock on his face, and was relieved.

"Has he?" Mr. Deane's flow of words belonged to a distant mood.

"Yes. You know David's generous instincts." Mr. Deane sat abruptly straight: he grasped a pencil, tapped the desk with it. "When he reads the general language of the Call he thinks it means him. I shouldn't be a bit surprised if he tells you some fine morning that his business career is ended. . . . Well—and yet you know, Mr. Deane, there's absolutely no such hurry."

"Hurry!" the older man exploded. Straightway, he held himself down and was still.

Tom went on: "If the War lasts, why, then, of course . . ."

"Of course, if the War lasts. But it won't."

"America can't squeeze all herself into Cuba. Our own affairs . . ."

"Precisely."

A silence. Mr. Deane was thinking.

Tom jumped up. "Well, sir," he thrust out his hand, "I hope I am pardoned for taking your time in this outrageous way. It naturally meant a great deal to me to have the mature judgment of some one like yourself on a boy whom I consider my friend. I am glad to find that you confirm my confidence in David's real business ability. I needed your corroboration. To tell you the truth, Mr. Deane, David's impetuosity worries me at times: that quality of giving without thought—without proportion. I was a bit afraid. You have reassured me. Thank you very much." He was gone.

That afternoon, Mr. Deane devised a plan. Deane and Company must render its quota of service to the national cause. Deane and Company was a single unit in the zeal of its officers and employes to enlist. Some restraint must be placed upon such vast enthusiasm. The country could admit to its armies only the merest fraction of those champing with the eagerness to serve. Meantime, the land must not be dislocated. Business must go on. Another course, even if due to an heroic response, would virtually be to lend comfort to the Enemy. Wherefore, in order to save its employees the embarrassment of individual choice, Deane and Company suggested that enlistments be confined to unmarried men between the ages of twenty-one and thirty. To such, their positions would be found open on their return from service. David was twenty.

This suggestion was printed and posted. David sought out his uncle.

"Uncle, I want to enlist."

It was his office; Mr. Deane was contained and strong with all the prestige and strategy of place. He did not want his nephew to enlist. This was to be a hot and nasty war. America had no need of his particular kin beyond his own chosen service for him in the House of Deane.

"Of course, my boy, of course. I don't dissuade you. Although you have seen the ruling of the directors—it leaves you out. Your flying in the face of that regulation might well cause a stampede in the office. But never mind," Mr. Deane hastened to add. He was not sure enough of that stampede. "Never mind, I am thinking it over. I want you to promise me you will do nothing until I have made certain inquiries regarding service. I will let you know."

David came again. Again, his uncle put him off. He was expecting word from Washington about commissions. How would David like to go as a full-fledged lieutenant?

"Worth waiting a short while for, eh, my boy? Lieutenant Colonel Roosevelt has advised us to wait. They are turning ordinary soldiers away. How would you like to defeat your own chances by being in such a childish hurry? If you really want to serve," he looked sharply at his nephew, "you must wait."

So David waited. He was not anxious to fight. His talk with Tom was a strange reason, a feeble one, for turning into a soldier. David knew dimly that his resolve had sprung contrariwise from a host of impulses and moods having no true connection with the War.

The public clamor overcrowded the camps. Manila Bay was won. There was small need of men. David in the pause began to create pictures of what battle meant. He did not like it. He was no coward. Simply, he thought death to so

young and fortunate a man must be a pity. He was a little sorry for those he would leave behind, if he did die. Nor did he wish to insist on losing a leg or an eye. He would have to bear the brunt of that. And it seemed a matter of insisting. True, if he were killed, Lois might lose her flippant bloom. That was an inducement. But there was no hurry even about hurting Lois. He could afford to postpone her anguish for a brief while. He could in the meantime enjoy it actually, by telling her about it.

"Lois," he came to say to her one evening, "I am going to enlist and go to Cuba."

They were sitting in their customary room. Nothing had greatly changed. If David's love for Lois had become an easier burden the reason was that he no longer drew so near to her. He did not sit so close and hold her hand and let the song of her hair atune his nerves. She whipped his blood less: and all of his love was the mere increased turmoil of his youth when her youth flowed upon it: the added leap of two dancing streams made one.

She also had learned the need of forbearance. But his aloofness spurred her. There was that one time when she placed her cheek against his, nestled her sharp shoulder in his breast.

"You don't like your old cousin a bit any more, do you?"

David held himself very still and apart. Then, what bound him to himself broke loose. What he did was splintering from his willed reserve so fast that soon all of his reserve was flown from him in action. His arms held her. All her body measured its panting frailty against him. His mouth hurt her lips. The rest of her was molten and not hurt half enough.

Lois struggled. For five minutes, she played a painful game of coolness. Then, she was composed. David dared not to speak. Whatever it was that had happened must be nothing,

since Lois denied it. Whatever it was must be for the last time.

So now David was childish to have forgotten. But it was hard always to remember against one's senses. The year was so intricate a thing for David. Hoping again, he said:

"I am going to enlist, and go to Cuba."

Lois beaming and clapping her hands: "David! How wonderful! You're going to be a soldier? Oh, I am glad!"

She jumped up, she embraced him, she sprang quickly away before her lips on his cheek had left their taste.

"When are you going?"

This dancing, elate girl was not the prostrate figure he had imagined fondly for this scene. The need of service in the tropics shriveled in an icy blast. Lois accepted him as part of the parade they had applauded together through the open window? She was quite willing to have him offer his life—lose it perhaps—for her cold delectation. Well, she had gone too far.

"None of your business!" he stamped away. "Leave me alone, now. I'm reading. . . ."

America fought Spain. Santiago fell. Porto Rico was prostrate. August brought Peace. David had stayed in New York.

His energies swirled back upon himself. Their bloom toward Lois was chilled: their bloom in War and adventure had been nipped. For the rest of the year, he was in silent and hidden turmoil.

Young love could not live with comfort upon Lois. Comfort—the comfort of hot pleasure or hot pain—was what it craved. David withdrew fast. He had high-sounding names for the faults he found in his cousin. She was heartless, selfish, cold. She bruised his tenderness and misprized his service. The truth was she offended his pride. She had shown that

she could deny herself the delight of his kisses: that she could survive even the picture of his death. Looking upon Lois for himself, the Narcissus of David's love found a shrunk-en ego. It was a mere question of time when he would accept this failure and look elsewhere.

But before he could redispense his forces for their new excursion David must gather them in.

He returned to himself as a traveler comes home. Like the traveler he found how the magic of change and of adventure worked not only upon the highway. Once more in the familiar place whence he had gone, he found it strange and full of undiscovered things.

He found that he was lonely: he found that he was afraid. He found that for these reasons he wished to leave the Deanes: that they made him lonely and that they made him fear. He had been sweetly at home in himself: sweetly one with what his mother had left him. Since his coming to New York, this place where his heart dwelt was empty. His heart had not even been abroad with him, it had been away. Without his heart, he had gone to work, worked hard; lived with the family of his uncle and been glad; come so to Lois and come to love her. A strange ghost of David.

The year ripened and softened into summer—the season of relaxation, the season of decision and creation. David grew aware of a rolling fullness outside him, and of an emptiness within.

He wanted to be himself. He felt all manner of hands upon him, save his own. Gentle hands: good hands. Not his.

The idea of solitude came and grew: it filled him. He did not know, he felt—what solitude would bring him. Had he not somehow known it, after all? He would go thinking of his mother. Was that not solitude? Perhaps to be alone would be to find her. To find her, he knew, would be to be alone no more. Dim inexorable forces these, which he could

not resist the more fatefully since he could not understand.

David was an animal that sought the healing of stillness. Who shall say how close his longing was to the creeping away of the brute? Perhaps the therapy of silence is no other than this return of longing to the source of longing: to union with the limitless well of life in which lies our world like a fleck in a limitless cup. In the philosopher seeking the Word, in the dumb creature seeking rest from his hurt the lure is one: the way back sure since it is the retracing of steps to the Beginning.

The sage and the brute only can go the way of spiritual homing without the folly of explanations: they are naked and submissive before the primordial voice. David, like most humans, was somewhat between these two. He was full of reasons.

He could say: it is not good for me to see so much of Lois. He could say: it is not right to impose further on the Deanes. After all, go back a year and he had not seen them: they had not bothered—or been bothered—with him. Let him blaze his own trail. . . . If he wished to be free to live his own life, was that not natural also? He had his own key at the Deanes. But there was a certain unavoidable restraint. Suppose he had wanted some night to stay out till morning? This had never been. It might. He was approaching twenty-one! What would his aunt say? What would Muriel and Lois think? Manhood needs room. It was awkward to bring friends to the big house: he seldom did so. What if, some day, he should want to bring a girl—bring her somewhere? A thrilling reason, this! To have a place that was his, where he could be with a girl! The hospitable house of the Deanes was not hospitable to such conceptions. In the air of these daughters, even the thought of adventure seemed strained. The presence of Muriel and Lois fretted his nerves: spiced them: taunted them. But if their lives, their

thoughts, the gay deckings of their bodies called forth sex, also they stifled it. David wondered if it would be always so, even when they were married. For a reason he could not name he decided he would not want to be a husband to Lois. There was a curious contradiction in these girls: something counterfeit; perhaps something thwarted. David once saw a great red flower—Muriel's—in a vase on her table. Thinking of other things, he smelt it: his mind went rushing toward it, finding it odorless. He crushed it. He had never felt the least impulse to crush a fragrant flower. Muriel and Lois were roses, but they had no perfume. He thought, if he held such a lover, he should want to crumple her. It might mysteriously be a way of having satisfaction—of having a substitute for satisfaction. Living in the house with Muriel and Lois, he found they sharpened his senses, yet blunted his will: heightened his needs, yet dwarfed his power to get them. And David knew it was Muriel and Lois who filled this house of the Deanes. It was the house of Muriel and Lois: not the house of his uncle and aunt. Why should he keep on living with two exacerbating cousins? . . .

There were reasons aplenty. But this fading day was a day that drifted beyond the world of reasons. He was alone.

He had been tired, he had managed to leave the office early, to be alone. He sat there, gazing away at the hot park with eyes that were truly looking inward.

Something stirred in him. Not the movement of unrest: rather a deep vibration as when coals kindle: the quickening from inert heat to glow.

What was he? What was he doing? A fear in this that was somehow sweet. For it impelled him to a sweet direction. He was nothing: what he did, mattered not at all. What of it? He was going to die some day, and that was sure. He had a haven there: and also he had a haven in the past. Perhaps he should have died when his mother died?



How he loved her now! With what new fragrance! Let him fear, and be cold. He had a way in his real life from these. Some day he would die and see his mother. This dwelling back, this yearning forward were one. . . .

She had eyes too knowing ever to need to look. Eyes that felt him. He sat there holding the skein of yarn that her long soft hands unraveled: silently. Her arms moved in rhythm: and her body: and her mouth, that was smiling. He was caught up, they dwelt together in a song whose cadence her busy hands were marking. The yarn that went from his own hands to hers, it bound them: it was not yarn at all: it was red. Sweetly, unendingly the music went that enclosed them. Sweet, unending were the changes of its mood. The cord no longer flowed from him to her. Within it was life running from her heart to her dear hands: and thence to his and to his thirsting heart. His mother fed him, always his mother smiled and he could see the breathing of her breast. She smiled, her breast rose; her breast rose and touched him. The touch was naked: naked mother-flesh to his lips.

He was an open mouth, drinking the touch of her breast: drinking his mother. Swinging . . . rocking . . . swooning . . . drinking his mother.

Footsteps in the hall. David lurched from his revery. Shreds of it clung to him spinning back to earth: he was still red and moist with it.

What did it matter if he was lonely? He would find loves. He was young and strong, his hands were not idle. The city embosomed him. His hands were not idle, seeking.

A knock at the door. There was comfort every way. Backward, forward: comfort of rest, comfort of adventure.

"Come in," he said. He was surprised at the laughter in his voice.

Tom and Cornelia: a little hushed looking about, taking

in his new walls and roof. He was on them, unbridled, pouring.

"Big enough to hold my bones as I sleep. . . . Don't look so shocked. Are you going to disown me?"

His words poured fast. Slowly, behind his words, he seemed to face them. . . . He was leaving the world of his family, the cloying and sweet drag of it. Here was the coming. These friends: tissues of thought and passion that were not his! What was his measure, what did he look like here? Through the door had come with them the City. Chaos of steel and stone in which swung numberless worlds of flesh, lactaries of blood. Sudden he was in it! He heard its throb in his room, he felt its Hand, weave of a million separate forces, loom on him, fall on him, test him. . . . His voice in a maze of roars, his eyes in a maze of suns. Transfiguration. Silence out of the roaring worlds. His own voice unafraid.

They listened to him.

"Let's enjoy ourselves to-night. Let's eat on Broadway and go to a theater. My treat. . . . I insist! Look, I'm rich!" He took a silver dollar, he tossed it through the window. "I'm ready. Come."

He was throbbing. He took Cornelia, and swung her waist and kissed her.

"Dear sweet Cornelia," he laughed. "I swear I've not been drinking a drop. . . . It's you! . . . It's you made me drunk. Don't you believe it? I swear it."

She was glowing with pleasure. After all, David seemed part her boy. Let him carry on. And he, pacing about the room.

"I swear it. I swear it is Cornelia. . . . By my——" He stopped. He was sober.

David was sober. Looking with a new-discovered tenderness at Cornelia.

"Excuse me," he blushed: he sank into a chair. Cornelia's cool hand was on his brow.

"Nonsense, David. We're all in the same mood for fun. Thank you for that. Let's chat a moment, and then we'll go."

She wanted him to rest. He was perspiring. It was just the sort of sudden weather to catch cold in.

Tom lighted a cigarette. He saw Cornelia smoothing David's hair. He saw David, unknowing, unseeing, smile into his sister's face, relax to her sweetness. He did not like this. He looked hard at them, puffing his cigarette. Until his gaze made them self-conscious; made Cornelia take away her hand: made David look at him. This was what he wanted. . . .



## VI

**D**EELY the luminous complex stir that came to him as he stood straining in the hall and gave up his hat and gave up his coat to the silent butler, that came through barring tapestries of blue upon mist of laughter and words, of feminine silks and smoke, of tinkle of frail china, made Tom afraid. He parted the swerving draperies as one cuts a wave, plunging into a sea. At once he was bound with this new terse element.

Fragments of Ohio still clung to him. He would have reeled in this dazzlement had there been space. But the room's brittle density upheld him, pushed him slowly in the sense of its scarce visible grain. Tom was submerged smiling.

Already a force worked in him, digesting this dense life, making it a function of his own, making its subtle fumes a stimulant for the force making it a function. Tom's mind groped, as he walked lightly, for an old-time hurt. . . . He had been badly cut in the wrist by a fall through a rocky road. For a month his cut wrist was bound close. When the bandage was off and the air let in, his wrist had seemed to possess a power of flight out of all proportion with his other wrist, with the remainder of his body. This had made for dissonance. It was as if only by good attention he held the soaring wrist in place. So now, his suddenly liberated will, as compared to all his body. Tom relaxed on the balls of his feet and had the adroitness to look about him. His field, this. In his two prematurely aged hands could he not toss this world? He felt power, he felt grace. His eyes gleamed. He laughed. Words, polished and caparisoned,

flew from his mouth as if the Design fitting them to him were absolute, were mystic. Tom's body was taut now. His mind had gathered in this reeling quality. But his body held to his will, as an artist sways to his violin. Meantime, still, the brittle density along whose imperceptible grain Tom flowed. Ladies with subtle ways of calling attention to their bosoms by suppressing them: their arms came angularly forth from the compressed and mysterious domain like spouts of energy—like escapes of self. So their arms, so their voices. At arm's end a tea-cup: at voice's end a word. Neither important. Sip tea, sip words. But the attention was engrossed in a deeper quaffing. These spouting shreds of self could be joined, could create a circuit, could release a current from heart to heart, from loin to loin. Tom felt this. He felt the suffused emotion of this splintering welter. He saw in the words, in the arms of ladies, sparks of invitation, fuses corruscating back to mute stores of combustible sensation. All of the afternoon seemed a disguisement, a limitless deferring of the reality of all the wills there massed. Tom wondered by what constant guard the fuses never burned to their full length, the explosives never went off: how they kept sheathed from this glitter of temptation. He perceived that the flames were cold and lightless. He perceived that the fires shot off into air: were free of substance: were in some careful way remote from the pent inflammables in every breast. And Tom had suddenly the vision of fireworks, blazing in a night above a score of hands that flashed white and calm in the broken darkness. Men and women displaying fire only outside themselves. Perhaps at the most, some inner rim of char.

He saw the goal of the grain-ward course he had been flowing. There was the hostess.

Her vibrancy was freer. She had space about her. In her true light at last, a certain glow that was warm, since

this energy was not, as in the others, so instantly splintered off by the packed impingement. She was insulated but Tom could touch her. Her glow came forth: he found a glow of his own. He liked this Mrs. Laura Duffield.

He had the sense of her subduedness as of a charm weighty enough to sink in this pandemonium of flicker. He bowed to pick it up.

"I have fought my way through to you, Mrs. Duffield. Congratulate me."

She held back her head; he saw the fading of her golden hair, the age of her throat, the indomitable blue of her eyes.

"This must be Mr. Rennard!"

She threw back her head still further, as if to send her laughter upward, and, boyishly, thrust out her hand. Taking it, Tom added to his vision the full ripe crowding of her breast—no longer firm to stand up alone—and the delicacy of her wrist.

She shunted him off almost at once: introducing him here and there, squandering the charm of her attention as one tosses showers of coin out of reach. He had no more of her.

But as Tom, having reached this goal of his progression, was now silted aimlessly away in wide, flat spurts of movement, he observed the crowd thrust together, into a unit, into a reason. It was so he carried it with him back into the hall, into the street. The crowd's form turned crass as he seemed to understand the will that had brought it into being. . . . It was her house: she had created this turmoil. Why? Why, each Wednesday afternoon,—to make no mention of doubtless other times,—did this glowing woman need to congregate such spill of life, pack it into her rooms, feed it, coax it to place its stamp upon her? What joy could there be in what must largely stultify her individual world? Tom pondered. Was this greedy crowd somehow a vessel in which Mrs. Duffield poured herself? That it might carry her off? leave

in the stir of her curtains, in the perfumed mist on her bibelots, a substitute for her own marks which should have quickened these? And if so, why?

Tom's casual yet forever determined mind associated these impressions widely until he knew that such habits were a deep part of the City's nature. He groped with his light.

"If I understand her, I hold her:—and all she holds. I'll go again. I'll see that this promiscuous call makes for a more intimate occasion."

The occasion came. But already Tom had learned to like the gatherings he was pleased to call promiscuous. Their fumes curled into his nerves, made them willing for more. A hint of his new appetite in his condemnation to Cornelia.

"Business, my dear Sis: Business. And of the lowest degree of horridness."

"I can see where it must help your connections."

"Let us hope so! Lord!" Tom paced up and down before Cornelia's latest cast. "If I don't get something out of these parties I shall have bartered my soul for nothing. . . . Satan will have cheated me."

"He never does," answered Cornelia.

Tom looked up as if stung.

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing extraordinary, Tom. I am convinced that folks who strike a bargain with the Devil do so, not for specific gain, but because they like his company."

Tom glowed at her with a cold smile of admiration.

"Splendid! . . . What does it mean?"

Cornelia's sharp shoulders shrugged.

"I suppose I like Mrs. Duffield's parties?"

"I am sure of it," she snapped. Then, quietly, like a mother to her son, "So stop protesting, like a dear man. Yes?"

It was true. Tom knew it, however, as well as his wise

sister. She understood with a great clarity only a part of Tom. She did not know how, in these protestations, he pleaded against himself, not with her. There was a depth in Tom more cold to these mundane blandishments than the surface was warm to them. Tom's conflict was deeper than the desire to conceal from himself and from his sister this worldliness which guided him about. It was a conflict rooted in his nature. There was a part of Tom that despised his conduct, hated his success, rose forever like a gaunt, uninvited guest to spoil his banquet. A ghost in Tom that was very much alive. . . .

It was born perhaps near the hour of Tom's birth in Dahlton. A very looming part of the world of Tom was this father whom his mother loved. His father was there. He needed to be taken. He needed to be taken as his mother took him. At the beginning, the bar between the mother and her child has no reality to the child. Mother and child are one to the child's rapt omniscience. The tall, gray-faced man had nervous hard hands which were strong. Often his hands viced the woman's arms till she screamed: they screwed her to a chair while his words lashed her: they turned her about to the door she was ordered to pass through. Then, in that dawn of the world, those hands left the mother who was cowed; they took the passionate sprawling flesh of Tom and thrust him to his crib, they turned him about so that Tom's eyes gazed at a blank wall whose denial of sight was terror.

Mrs. Rennard loved Tom's father. Her senses had mostly pain of him, but passion also. Since her senses loved him, they needed to love what her husband gave them. Tom, feeling in these dim passionate days the aching presence of his father upon his world—upon his mother and upon himself—the visitation of his cruelty upon them—took him as did his mother. He shared his mother's sensuous satisfaction in abject pain. Like her he made joy of anguish:



like her, molded himself to love and to depend upon this man as the pain-giver, since such was the form of his love, such the burden of his support. Mrs. Rennard loved her husband, her senses took him. Tom looked upon his father with his mother's senses.

His mother died. Curtin Rennard went to the child. He lifted him in his arms.

"Thomas," he said, "you are to be a motherless child. Your mother is dead. I want you to pray with me to God—to thank Him for the cruel thing that He has brought upon us."

Tom repeated his father's words as his father spoke them. "My mother is gone, I bless You and thank You, God. She is gone, and I am alone without a mother. God, I thank You. She is gone to join the Chosen in Your presence. God, I thank You. My mother is gone—perhaps—to be damned in Hell. God, I bless You and thank You."

Curtin Rennard took the child high in his arms: gazed into his frightened eyes: seemed pleased thereat, for he embraced him. Tom was happy then. He did not miss his mother.

He never missed her. All his will was fixed on the pain-dealing, passionate parent. His rival—his rival-self—his mother was no more there. He was more free to love, to suffer, to rebel, now that the great sick lover, the great sufferer, the unsucceeding rebel with her wide skirts and her clear wan forehead was gone from their world.

A deep and subtle relationship grew between the tremorous child and the thwarting, thwarted, powerful man, his father.

A relationship unmeasured and un-named in the peripheral vicissitudes of their ages and their minds. An eye unchecked by surfaces and the color of habit, drawn to the womb of life, must have found Tom's love for his father in those days deeply atune with the love of his father's wife who was dead:

must have seen the bereaved love of Curtin Rennard astir for a new replenishment in all his children.

So deep a dream could not grow unchallenged in one as quick with reality as Tom. He rebelled. His nature munitioned itself for rebellion.

There was Cornelia. She saved herself from her father by making into an ideal her dim devotion to her mother. Tom took her as ally. Cornelia imaged her saving devotion in maternal deeds, she imaged it in clay. Her mother was sanctuary from the common danger. In Tom grew great love for his protecting sister: above all tense self-abandonment to his father's greatest rival, the real world. Here lay freedom for Tom! His blood knew that the hidden love must scorch and shrivel in the sun. He courted the sun. He was in perpetual revolt against his father's hold on his emotions: against his father's closeted ideals: against the source of his father's hold, his own deep identity with his mother.

Hence, Tom's distrust of women, his devotion to Cornelia, the frenzied scatter of his forces in objective life. During Tom's boyhood, he was almost a woman in his attitude toward women: in each of them he fought his mother, fought her betrayal of him—as of herself—to his dominant father. His love of Cornelia was at once a way-station for his self-freeing will and a substitute for the parental yokes from which he needed freedom.

Directly through her, indirectly against his father, Tom grew in love with imagery, with color, with the Symbol—the artist in Tom grew. From his passionate seeking of the outer world, there rose his power of success in society and in law. For the world loves the lavish spender of himself: it will run to the largess of his ruin as wolves to their meat.

Yet as Tom saw his practice swell, saw the doors behind which stood butlers open to him, the silent music of his blood went on. All these talents and emotions were reactions. Be-

hind them stood the Image of a man—hating art, hating social intercourse, hating life,—of a man beckoning Tom back to an ecstatic, fabular peace. For that man's hatreds also were reactions . . . behind them . . .

All that ancient lure was now resistance to the life Tom flung himself upon, even as all this life was his resistance to that hidden lure. He would consecrate his talent, he would build him his church, Success. But his mind ran against it, weakened the rock on which he builded. Cornelia was knowing. Here were depths beyond her vision. She saw chiefly the young man so soaked in his Puritan upbringing that he was loath to face the joys he had of his worldly undertakings: a very usual hypocrisy and of no importance, but one she hated since she was full of it also.

"I don't see," she said, "why you should be ashamed of enjoying Mrs. Duffield's parties. Heaven knows we had lonely enough years, here, first."

"You go with artists—with intelligent people. You have too much kindness to imagine how dull the rich and the successful are."

"Nonsense! Their success speaks continual wise words. Their gold is brilliant."

So they swayed back and forth, these two. They were equals. They had never become rivals—before David.

Laura Duffield invited her new friend to dine.

"Come early," she said, "I want you to meet my son, before he goes to his usual party."

He entered the drawing-room: a young girl and a young man were there.

"Farge and Marcia, this is Mr. Rennard."

Their polite greeting was sauced in an expectant languor and a very harmless resentment. It was as if they were resigned to a bad habit of their mother.

Marcia, looking at Tom's trimly rhythmic body, thought: "It is lucky Mamma is getting a divorce and must behave."

Farge was too dull to syllogize but he twinged with a sort of envy and almost pondered out: "*My* friends are not freakish enough for Ma."

Tom was seated and Mrs. Duffield was already in full talk.

He found it hard, listening to her, to take in these two. As she talked, she insisted on holding his eyes. It was as if she talked for no greater purpose. Marcia and Farge sat on a lounge just outside his range. They were looking at him. Farge smoked a cigarette; he had offered none to Tom. Marcia leaned far back, her legs were outstretched straight; she threw one ankle over the other. Mrs. Duffield made good the deficiency of her son. She never smoked, but she had full provisions for her friends. Tom felt how from ankle to neck this girl was firm and spare and full of a voluptuous relaxation. Only her eyes were taut, perhaps from poisoning him. She did not listen to her mother's words. She hummed a tune very faintly: her upward foot marked time.

She got up. She jerked her shoulders, as if the gown that clung to them were an obtrusion. Perhaps the obtrusion was elsewhere in the room. "It must be late, Farge?"

The boy gave a limp hand: Marcia nodded sharply. Tom felt that Farge had not wanted to shake hands, and that Marcia would not have minded. He noticed that this girl was built very like a boy: and that Farge with his pudgy rondured body and pink cheeks was rather like a girl. Alone with Mrs. Duffield he found that he had been attracted by her daughter.

He was not sorry. This charm upon him made it easier to be charming. He told an anecdote of that day in court: he had been in court seventeen days before, but instinct made him say "to-day." Talking, it came to him how far more naïve and fresh this oldening, troubled mother was than her

young daughter. Tom did not understand this. He felt it would not have been safe to tell white lies to Marcia. He wondered why the strange weariness and slackness of the girl came to him as pleasure.

"Why, Mrs. Duffield, is the younger generation prematurely old?"

She laughed with her liquid laughter. She did not guess beneath his question.

"Why? Do you mean yourself? You are not prematurely old. Oh, I am sure not. You are mature. You have been forced so early to play a man's part in the world."

"That can't be it. I see it most in young folk that do not work at all."

"Well, not working at all is the part of the very old."

"I am still not satisfied. I almost think that the shrewd parents of Competitive America have learned to palm off their own weariness on their children. Just like them it would be: a trick of the trade."

"It is nothing but sophistication, dear Mr. Rennard. We old folks have the naïveté of savages. Our children are civilized. That is all." She examined him. "Does this weariness repel you?"

Tom watched sharply without heightening the look of his eyes. She had no idea whence had come his thoughts.

"No," he ventured. "That is proof, I suppose, that I am touched myself? It attracts me rather. Of course, not weariness alone."

Mrs. Duffield was weary: endlessly weary. Often she flung herself to bed with a horror of the needs of her toilet. Often she awoke in the morning with the demands of getting up a mountain in her path. She took Tom's words to herself. She would not have to grimace her weariness away. It would be pleasure to be with him.

Soon they were friends. When he came in to her, she

thrust out an arm in greeting, and did not budge from her lounge.

"Make yourself nice and at home; or I'll have to get up and do it for you. I'm so comfy!"

Her weariness went before her admission of it with him. He stood over her; she was aware that his eyes could see within the negligent folds of her flimsy housegown. What did it matter? They were friends. Once she said:

"Make believe this is an evening dress. Then the décolleté won't shock you."

"Then also, it won't interest me," said Tom.

She needed to know everything about him: that she might help him.

"I've made up my mind on that!"

She told him of herself more and more: more and more easily. She told herself that she could not otherwise gain his confidence: and she needed that really to help him, really to be "friends." In truth she craved his help, she was glad to purchase it with whatever aid her place and her connections might afford.

"It is hard to speak of such things," she said, half sitting up on her lounge, with a bare arm falling straight toward the floor. At once it was easy. The ease of her lying there before him and the glow of his eyes taking her in were a lubricant to her words. She could never have spoken so at first in a tailor-made suit. She would have laughed with the freedom of sincere denial at a friend who ventured to link the exhibition of her soul with the exhibition of her body.

It was through Laura Duffield that Tom came to his real establishment in practice. Gilbert Lomney was her cousin. For him, Laura was a brilliant woman who somehow had managed also to be good. He had great admiration for her, not a little fear. It was by her strategy that "Lomney and Rennard" was brought about.

The City had welcomed its own stuff in Tom and Cornelia. The City had come from the same sort of place. At the beginning, Tom felt this not at all. He was frightened by the City. He did not understand when its heights bent down and touched him. Each suppliant before New York goes through the same amaze as the unfriendly Town proves lewdly hospitable. Few dare to admit her wantonness since the avowal would take from the measure of their prowess. In the early bewilderment of being taken-in, of finding a naked mistress in place of a shrouded goddess, the critical faculties are struck to sleep.

The years of the preparing of success in Tom were like the growth of love in their delirious simplicity, the sort of wild progression that one finds best revealed in mathematics. A true tumescence. Tom found some one who liked his humor and his freedom. He introduced him to a strategic hostess. There was opened a breach in the trenched City. There was more than one of these amiable friends. Each multiplied opportunity at a geometric rate. Tom was soon in a position to choose, and from choice comes judgment. He was soon surfeited with chances, and from surfeit comes disillusion.

To be alone in the City requires a technique that only the child born in the City or the genius may possess. On all sides of Tom were people ready to be amused, ready to use him, ready to use him up. No bright young man without the taint of an uncomfortable message need go to waste in New York. Each clever little thing he does or says will echo, until, if he does not take care, he may be deafened by its rebounding clamor. He may drop like a pebble, he may sink straight to the oblivious bottom of the lake: but not before myriad wreathings forth have made him the hour's center of a rippling world. If he step forward, he will step on some one's heels, and that some one's friends will, for this chance

beneficence, cherish and advertise him. If he step back, the same thing will occur. If he stand still, he will obstruct the one behind him who is moving forward, and this too will net him a sincere appreciation. He must be a genius or a willful man to escape acceptance by the City.

Tom Rennard was neither. He found that the man in whose law-offices he learned far better than in law-school appreciated him and, when he was admitted to the Bar, sent him work. He found, arguing a trivial motion, that he was eyed with interest by nonchalant attorneys as he stepped back to the counsel-table. He found that his brain could be sold if at first he were willing to sell it cheap. Lawyers too busy drumming business thought they were exploiting Tom when they employed him to be of counsel in some tort case and let him do the work. Several dull fellows with gratuitous patronage stuck to him regularly until they found themselves with fees in their pockets and with their sinecures entailed. Tom had a way of making a Judge smile that the men of the Bar respected as they would not, in a lifetime, respect Justice. He was quick to see that the able counsel acts, before the Bench, not as a lawyer but as a man: that the tricks of erudition and the flourishes of oratory gleaned from law-school had best be packed away. His average Judge was a shrewd politician who, above all, must not be made to feel his juridic ignorance. What he required from counsel was a mirror in which he might see his power reflected: and his power consisted not at all in judicial learning—display of that was an embarrassment—but in a canny sense of men and use of means. Tom talked to the Bench, man to man, asking-man to man-who-hath, with a candor most attorneys needed twenty years to strip to. His attitude brought reward. Judges leaned comfortably back and talked things over with him. When he reappeared before them, he was remembered.



"But do you think, Mr. Rennard, that this point is pertinent?"

"Yes, your Honor, I do. And I am sure if you will just recall to mind the case of Larson versus Mann—the question is one that has long interested me and I looked it up——"

Who was this Mr. Rennard? this young and unknown Mr. Rennard who had a way of warming the air of a court-room to his own purposes? The question was asked: the questioners answered it. They gave him respect before he had clients: they gave him the beginnings of repute at a time when he had nothing else. Hating and fearing each other, they wanted Rennard on their side.

Tom's advance in the social world was synchronous. The ladies who give teas are the sort who care for unattached young men. They are unhappily married, or at least unsatisfyingly so: if they have children they wish to get free of loving them too much. Grown sons can be admired safely in a surrogate: grown daughters can be restrained from mastery in a fierce competition. The smart young man may be a weapon and a drug for the woman nearing forty with social honors to defend. He serves to protect her from life and to supply her with it. The relation has its hazards. It must run the course of the golden mean. The man must not really love, not really win his lady. For her sake, as for his. If she gives herself consciously to him, she will begin at once to bully him like a son or to use him up like a husband. He will become both son and husband instead of the escape from them. She will simply repeat her family failures concentratedly upon him. He will no longer provide a cure for her life. He will stand on the brink of disaster or dismissal.

Through no prescience and no conscious cunning; rather by the balance of his nature, Tom was made for such a rôle. And Laura Duffield needed him.

Meantime had come the climax of her troubles. Mrs. Duffield was getting a divorce. It was being borne in on her that her husband was nearly bankrupt and that her alimony would be in ironic contrast to the demands of her position. Her way of living was no small part of her "morality." It was menaced.

Deems Duffield was a broker. For fifteen years he had made a debauch of his life and won from it a rare measure of content. When at last Mrs. Duffield decided on divorce, his fortune—his last fortune—had gone the way of his self-respect. It was plain that there would be difficulty in keeping Farge at College. Fortunately, Marcia had no educational conceits. She was at ease with a few lovely gowns: she was informed with a spirit of shrewd economy that amazed her improvident mother. Duffield seldom saw his children: which Marcia considered rather silly. "Why not? He's delightful company." She had the wit to enjoy him, perhaps potentially the depravity not to be concerned with his. But Farge was dully loyal and not on speaking terms with his prodigal father. Duffield's ruinous irresponsibility had broken his son's spirit. In the example of his father's evil charm, Farge lost that brusque approach to the demands of life which mark off certain men from the hordes of the mediocre. His cynicism was inept, his anger impotent: his confidence was gone. Adversely, her father's nature went toward the making of Marcia. It taught her to swim nimbly between rocks, love danger, understand the world. Her cynicism became a deadly intuition of the channels of success: her anger was a sheath preventing the incisions of sentiment and pity: her break with childish faith marked the emergence of a design based on that faith's falsity. It seemed to her a trait far too emotional in her mother to be angry at the man who had ruined them all.

"Leave him be! You know he's amusing to talk to.

Never worry, Mamma. Soon as I'm tired of this I'll get married and fix you for life."

There was no slightest doubt in Mrs. Duffield of Marcia's capacity to keep her promise.

From her confidence in part came the inspiration to bear up, to borrow dangerous sums of money. For years the Duffields had been spending twice what came in: he on his Broadway favorites, she on her social equipage. But even after Duffield's strike against paying for his wife's affairs, even after the first skirmishes of the divorce with their cold proof that the clever broker would be able to escape with a scant alimony, her social functions remained brilliant, her head remained high. Laura Duffield was playing the rôle her faith, her one faith, sanctified. She needed the confessional of youth for the strength to do so.

One last time, her husband called on her. A smooth, stout, suave man: smartly groomed, full of sweet words, twinkling of eye.

"Laura," he said, "it will be bad business for us both if you insist on this divorce. And the worst goes to you. I can weigh in to a mighty small income, of which half, dear, will be yours. Most of my winnings are of a sort, my dear, that it would make Justice blush to have to rule on. So, considerate gentleman that I am, I must hide from the Judge what might prove embarrassing. Hand in hand, you and I can bear up and have no fear. For all that is mine is thine. But, dear, if you insist on this legal separation you must be satisfied with what will turn out to be your legal separation from my money. You would faint, beloved, if I told you what you may expect."

Mrs. Duffield saw the very grim reality in his threat: knew as alone the social officer knows what misery of deceit and sordidness the want of funds must bring to the fulfillment of the one life she could live. She answered:

"I can't stand any longer the thought that you are my husband. I must be free of that. I am unclean and I am taking a bath."

Duffield smiled.

"The bath, my dear, you took some years ago. Why repeat it in public?"

She winced.

"I have no wish to resume relations with you, Laura. All I object to is this exhibition."

"Unfortunately, it has to be. I relish it no more than you. I deserve it less. Our marriage was public. My cleaning my hands of you must be public also. If you were so considerate and scrupulous as you pretended, you could save us much by not defending the suit."

"I may be considerate. But if I am hit, I hit back. I have not objected to your virtual quarantine of me, these past ten years. I have behaved and kept up front. I have shown in at your parties and paid your debts when they grew troublesome. The only time, my dear, ever to pay a debt. But if you insist on placarding my love-affairs, I'll fight."

"Very well. Go and do your worst. I shall of course get the dirty end of this. I have, all my life. But don't expect I'll make peace with you."

"Laura, you are a fool." Duffield stood up.

"I know I am. I am sort of glad, that you think I am a fool. It puts me miles out of reach of your kind of wisdom. I know I am a fool. You had your share in making me one. But even you shan't succeed in making me a coward."

Deems Duffield sighed and drew on his fawn-hued gloves and sent a little whistling note through his shut teeth. Coming up to his wife, he looked at her and slowly shook his head. He placed his hands on her thin shoulders: their eyes met.

"It's a fight, then, my dear?" He said this pleasantly.

"I am sorry, Deems, you have made such a ruin of our lives."

"I am sorry, also, Laura."

He drew her quickly to him. He kissed her forehead and stepped back.

"Good-by. You are the best thing I have ever had, and I hate to see that I have lost you. But it's not the best things we need most, my dear. It's the ordinary things. Often in life, we have to get along without the best in order to have the common."

She stood breathing deeply, white and strained from his words. In her mind was a racing kaleidoscope: how he first had kissed her, and taught her love; how fearful she had somehow been, and how he had fallen away. In her soul was a sense of guilt. She said nothing: he was gone.

She rang the bell.

"Delia," she said to the entering maid, "I have changed my mind. If any one calls this afternoon, I am in."

She threw herself on the chaise-longue and picked up her novel. *The Egoist* of Meredith. Its crystalline obscurity distressed her. It seemed so far removed from life: so frigidly in diapason between the Sun and the North Pole. She threw the book away and scribbled a sentence on the edge of a newspaper that lay near her hand.

"All marriages that turn out monstrously begin as idylls. Indifference at the start is the one defense against horror at the end."

"How I wish I could express myself!" she sighed. She tore off the edge of paper, crumpled it, thrust it in her corsage. Marcia was there.

"I met father in the street." Marcia made no further greeting to her mother. "He seemed in fine fettle."

Speaking she crossed to her own room. She shut the door. Her thought ran: "Papa hasn't Mamma's family but he makes

up for it in liveliness." She examined herself in the mirror and took off her hat. "I wonder whether it is a wise thing to confuse marriage and love. I wonder whether the woman must always get the worst of it, like Mamma. Perhaps not. Mamma is the so-called innocent one. Perhaps the rule is that the innocent one, of whatever sex, should get the worst of it. I'll remember that." She had dropped her suit on the floor and slipped into a blue *crêpe de chine* gown that hung straight and square from her shoulders. Within it, her body moved like a still sure mechanism. "Oh, well," she said, half aloud, throwing herself on her couch and taking a book, "the sins of the parents shall educate the children unto the third and fourth generation."

She remembered her unopened letters on the table near the lamp beside her. She reached for an ivory paper-cutter and began to open them.

One of them, from an unknown hand:—

DEAR MISS DUFFIELD:

I have something of interest I wish to tell to you, and I must see you alone to do so. Will you have tea with me, say at the *Orange Tea-Pot*, next Wednesday at five? You will catch the reason and the caution implied in the rather unfrequented place. It is not bad, though.

I hope to see you, and am,

Yours most sincerely,  
THOMAS RENNARD.

Marcia read the remaining notes: placed them all back in their envelopes upon the table: took her book. She read for an hour. She called the maid, ordered a bath, undressed. She stood for a moment before her cheval glass, hesitant to throw her bath-robe over her nakedness. With a free delight she watched the bright strength of her body. Her hips were slight and firm: her breasts were two swift standing rondures: her abdomen drew tautly down into the straight and narrowly

set legs. Marcia knew from statues she had seen that this faint triangle of strain, tracing and pointing downward at her thighs, was almost masculine. There was voluptuousness in this: and in the clear black hair falling about her body, making its whiteness burn. Marcia hated that flabbiness of mind and form which she called feminine. Coquettishly, as if to bar another's pleasure, she threw a robe across her shoulders. She seemed to be outside desiring to be in. With the check to her nibbling sense, her mind went free, and she began to think of Thomas Rennard.

How was he able to be sure she would not take his presuming letter to the lady he was assiduously courting—and exploiting? Marcia caught herself so forming her question. She tried to change it: "How does he know I won't? . . . Well, I will." She wondered if she would. Imperceptibly, she had returned to the first form of her question. She resented Tom. Her mother was working for him with far greater will than any of the other "friends" had been able to inspire. It was clear already that this young flasher from Ohio was going to have the dull but golden Lomney for a partner. A bit dangerous, thought Marcia. What if next year, her mother tired of him? What if he proved too false? Marcia smiled. There seemed small doubt of that. There he would be, deep in their Group, inextricable. Matters must not go so fast. Marcia must delay them. She pictured the pair, lost in their confidences, and was troubled how.

She came back to the note. What had heartened him to send it? Was Mr. Rennard after all a rash importunate, one easily ruined? Marcia did not doubt the true purpose of the note. He wanted her to tea. He could not pay attention to her here. That was enough. Did he truly desire this enough to risk his hold on her mother? A dangerous—compliment.

She went over the always chance occasions she had seen him. Never alone. She had felt the pointedness of his

glances toward her: caught him talking to her mother with a strained interest in her own mood. She had tested this by changing her mood and watching his rapid awareness. He was a curious man: bright, lithe in all senses, unbelievably hard, yet fraught with a glow that she was sure impact might turn to fire. She wandered over his personality. She felt he was too clever and too sensible to be sincere. Yet his standards seemed too directly those of his intelligence and strength to lend reason to insincerity. She did not know. She did know she would have tea with him: and say nothing to her mother.

It was easily reasoned. "I'll control him, myself. If he goes too far or too fast, I'll have the weapon of a word to Mamma. What a brazen, simple country boy it is! . . . "

She went: she was right at least in this, that Tom had nothing to impart to her "of interest" beyond that he liked her and of course couldn't see her *really* at her mother's. In all else, she was wrong. She could not understand this sudden, cold-passionate man. In writing to Marcia Duffield, he had not understood himself.

"Perhaps I'll know better when I have talked to her across a table."

She came with a spur of adventure. She was trapping her foe. While he reveled in his success, letting his pleasure out, she would enmesh him. Thereafter, should he ever move in a direction she did not like, Marcia would soon show him in whose hands he was. Marcia was so astir with her scheme that she thought herself cool and collected. She had a dogged affection for her mother: a sort of animal loyalty in which was properly admixed a very human loyalty to herself. Here, she was quite sure, there was question only of her mother.

Tom, meantime, waited and went over in his mind the impressions in confidence of which he had dared write his letter.



"A girl absolutely incapable of carrying an altruistic act to an end . . . and yet—a Christian! If she resolved to serve her mother by telling her I was flirting with her daughter—and she is convinced that this would serve her mother: she must be hostile instinctively to her mother's friend—she would have to be sure, first, she did not care for me. She is coming to-day to find out. It all depends on to-day. If she does not like me she will betray me with a sense of serving her mother. If she does like me, she will take secret delight in making her mother a fool. . . . Dear little fool herself! If she knew how much I love her black straight hair and her white straight body, how little I care in contrast for her mother's interest in my future! If she knew—well, she must know."

He went forward, seeing her at the door—seeing the shrewd determination in her face as she came forward to him.

"Miss Duffield," he said, "you are not going to make the mistake so many make of thinking what I do a deliberate thing. If you will examine my note with care, you will find in it all the silly guile of sudden inspiration. I am a creature of moods." He looked at her as he had wanted to, across the table. "So are you, Miss Duffield."

"How do you know?"

"Why else did you come?"

She was not so foolish as to say: "There might be other reasons." She was not so willing as to admit his statement. She was silent. Tom began to laugh: a clear, long laughter. When he was done, they both knew he had laughed something away.

The rest was easy. Marcia was certain that Tom was the contrary of canny and deliberate. He liked her: he had done a direct thing to see her. He was unworldly as ever a man must be who understands a woman.

And she liked him. She liked the respectful way he spoke

of her mother. Somehow, it gave her a sense that he was trustworthy: although she had no thought of why this quality should particularly interest her. She liked the assumption in his words of her superior perspective.

"Of course, Mrs. Duffield would not understand our coming down here to have tea together. Dear lady! Does not a tinge of deception have to go into a sincere relation? Every mother must forget her daughter if she would live. It is the duty not alone of her friends—of her daughter also—to see she may. For her to know the truth of you and me would be, not to know the truth from the standpoint of her and me, but an irrelevant, damaging lie."

He said these words, not pleadingly, not in argument, but as two co-religionists perhaps might mention an unmooted point: or as two students might discuss a lesson they had learned together. . . . Tom had, not an enemy in the house of Duffield, but another ally: a subtle, an amazing one. Far from having been delivered into Marcia's hands, the hastening events laid her at least equally in his.

They balanced the accounts. . . .

Marcia was wine for Tom. Never before had he been so held by the body of a woman. Never had he dreamed a woman could so swing with both reserves and desires: so without effort, without stint.

She filled his room with miracle. She filled his life with the ease of power. How did this come about: this wonder he had in touching her cold skin, in meeting the hardness of her teeth, her soft lips? What was this Marcia?

Madness. . . . Madness in sanity as wine in a cool cup. She came to his warm room. She did not kiss him. She did not speak. She did not stir. She was there.

She felt a flame rise near her. It would soon catch her clothes, burn them up. Her it would temper, make mellow.

She stood, looking at the flame, this subtle man, who held back his hands and whose eyes were on her. What should she do? Why did he not come forward? He burned straight, there across the room, like a flame in a windless world. Always his hands held back. Her clothes sagged to a dulling weight. . . . Marcia stood swaying with the need of burning. Would he not help? Then she would help herself. Delicious fool that he was!

He was perfume and flame: each pore of her was big with him.

Tom watched the firm, still whiteness of her self emerge from the lie of her clothes. No woman. She was a god. She was a pillar of purity and strength. No lascivious rondures and flauntings of flesh, no softnesses. A human form stripped to essential grace. An instrument of living, spare and direct like a command, flaying like a rod, swift like his passion.

They loved.

They gave no thought to the Shadow—the long intricate life-way of which the passion of woman and man is the mere flaming threshold. Both of them knew this. Each drank, in the other, a secret satisfaction whose mystery and timelessness thrilled them. They did not understand themselves or each other. Their love's dissidence from the plodding and gluttonous way of husband and wife was a brew sharp, sweet, wild: they were drunk in it together. No more they had in common than their intoxication. Themselves, each other, the nature of their love—all was unknown and secret. They scarce spoke of it. They drank and were glad, and were never content. . . .

Out of the silence of each, they came again. The subtle liquor worked its miracle; they were one into a flame whose leaping walled about them—disappeared as a song stops—leaving them their silences. These carried them off, each to

a far deliberate world. No memory, no reason: absence of desire. Until such time as a rising murmur in their separate silences swerved them, flung their silences once more together.

All this, merely the spill of Tom's full life; prelude in hers. His work prospered. Tom had the genius of diligence. He poured himself no more into his affairs downtown than into some unremunerative affair at a friend's, where the price of applause was exhaustion. With Tom, exhaustion was breathing space till the next passion. So he prospered in work and in play. Laura Duffield was his devoted friend. Gilbert Lomney was his partner. To both, as to Marcia, he was satisfying in the measure that was wise.

Upon this heyday of his success, David now blundered as a dull boy stumbles over another's floor-full of tin soldiers.

There seemed no cease to the miracle of Marcia: to the delight of the insatiety between them. Laura Duffield was divorced and more than ever with her new gallant friend. In her family and in her world, he was a secret champion, a strong prop. His relations had wreathed out. He was welcome in many houses: he was a chord of many circles. His partner had come to worship him with a canine fidelity. Lomney was so dully at home in his desirable set that he no longer felt its desirability: he was convinced that in introducing Tom he did the set a favor. Tom did not disillusion him. He laughed about it with Cornelia, and made her partner of his pleasures in order to keep her partner of his reserves. With her to see on the morrow, Tom took to the gilded foyers, the gilded youth of the City with a cool grace that lissomly assured his comfort and his usage. Laura Duffield gave him a gesture of confidence; Marcia the glow of triumph: his law affairs the agility to move forth and back with telling unconcern. Cornelia gave him what he needed of a home. He was a splendid product of the City. Now,

David Markand, with his dear clumsiness, to clog and clutter it all.

Marcia felt it first, felt it before he did.

She sat on his bed; she looked at him where he smoldered in a corner smoking intemperate cigarettes. It was a mood, she thought; she said nothing. She put on her clothes.

"Good-by."

He tore apart his reverie. "Good-by."

But the edge of his love was dulling. Always now, he was likely to leave her side and sit away from her and look away and smoke: while she lay aching with blinded desire, watching him, pressing her breast with angering hands till its pain stop the pain of her heart.

She sat up suddenly so he was forced to look. His eyes were upon her whom they loved; yet they were distant, they were lost in a mist, they did not see her. In her beauty she stood up to him, all her clear straight agile body calling him close: he bit his lips and his eyes were looking beyond her.

Then she said: "There's some one else, is there not, Tom?"

He did not look at her eagerness. He shook his head.

"There's another woman."

He was angry. "It's not so." More force spilling away that her body yearned for. This urged her on.

"There's another woman!"

She needed his focussing upon her, even if it were but in wrath. She stood over him now. She knew he loved her so, with the lines of her body shrill and clarified in standing. Tom was white with anger. He grasped her and broke her in anger. She laughed in love. . . .

He loved her as never before, that afternoon. Because he loved her as never again.

The year that David lived alone was the year of Tom's struggle with him. It was not a question of changing his life.

It was a question of capturing the subjective opposition, as it came forward in the nearness of his new friend.

Tom knew a way. This inner inhibition stood objectified in David. Let him capture David. David was his old love of giving instead of constantly taking, of being calm and passive instead of constantly pursuing. In him, Tom saw the restful cleanliness of despising this race he was running hotly: the futility of spending one's dreams upon a contest that was never done and whose prize was death. He would not give up his entry. He needed the mundane sense of power, the badge of success: he was too sensual to forego the liquor of attention. But he needed also to still the voice that kept saying: "Fool!" By the old process of projection, he now saw these words in the eyes of David. If he could have David, he could have silence.

He watched him with a growing steadfastness and a dwindling clarity. He knew at last that he wanted to win him. He knew that the affection between David and Cornelia stood most in his way.

All that year, he studied David. He came to understand his habits and his moods. He inserted himself upon his groping friend with the deliberate reserve of a chemist applying weighed ingredients to a solution.

The measuring was no easy task. David was within himself. He was hidden. It was plain he showed more of his mind and spirit to Cornelia than to her brother. They spent evenings, late afternoons together. Walks on Sundays became almost a custom. Tom was frequently along. There was no slightest wish to bar him. But Cornelia encouraged those very traits in David that must keep him intractable, secure to himself.

"And the world,—and the world?" Tom argued. "You are living in the world. It touches you on every side, at every instant. You are wrong to try to ignore or to despise it."

Usually, Cornelia answered for her friend.

"We are the world, if we choose to have it so. What you mean by the world is only the gross and the impure. Why alloy yourself with that?"

Tom laughed. He knew this was David working upon his sister. Her life and her work were essentially conformist. She was no hermit, no rebel. She had had her great revolt, she had settled. She was not so very different from him. But Tom was too wise to say these things before their friend. To humiliate Cornelia before David would have the effect of estranging him. David would judge him and not understand. The idea that he could influence Cornelia was beyond David's belief. . . . All this behind Tom's laughing.

He kept silent, above all kept pleasant. He saw Cornelia's motherhood once more hunting and hungry. She was going to preserve David from a hostile world, though it be with her own body. He watched her passion and David's dispassionate compliance. He worked his own will when they were alone.

"Cornelia has a habit I can well enough understand of wishing to make my friends into what she would have liked to be, herself."

"Isn't she what she would like to be herself?" asked David.

Tom smiled, and was serious. "To succeed, for most of us, means breaking through an iron barrier. Even those of us who do so cannot escape a little maiming."

"You are so violent in your statements, Tom!" The idea of Cornelia maimed was nonsense to him.

They went on talking of her new season's work.

"There were a number of unfortunate little changes she had to submit to in her exhibit. I was heart-broken. But thank the Lord, Cornelia is sensible. Else, she might be a good artist but she'd be broke."

"Why won't they let people alone, when they have beautiful things to say?"

"Oh, they will, quick enough! Strictly alone. They'll not pester them with orders. You mustn't take Cornelia's art too seriously, David. It is chiefly her art of living. If you think her very pretty statues great, you'll be taking to heart every word she tells you. . . ."

All subtly merged with his love for her and his loyalty and knowledge of the years when he had slaved for her and given her her chance. David could not bring himself to the consciousness of an objection. He said to himself:

"Tom is simply honest beyond any honesty I have ever imagined." He was right. Tom was. He was not disloyal to his sister. He said no word of untruth. He was as kind and as loving as he had ever been. As ten years before, he would have sacrificed much for her welfare. But she was playing a game against him: and he answered.

David came to believe the hot-and-cold of talk with Tom and Cornelia Rennard an atmosphere implied in friendship with such clever, exceptional folk. He began to feel that Tom's candor was to be prized, even if it was not always easy to interpret: and that Cornelia's warm encouragement was to be discounted, since it meant escape from the ungenerous reality Tom told him he must soon or late confront. Because of, and in spite of her sweet charm, Cornelia somehow must be discounted.

He was sure he cared no less for her. He was a man: he was understanding a woman's natively circumscribed philosophy, her natural taste for a reserved and personal world. Cornelia stood already, artist though she was and rebel at least in one gesture of her life—for Family. Tom was the world of affairs and of adventure. Oh, yes: David began to see all that. So of course he could understand the little flares of strain between the two. When Cornelia's attitude



implied a rebuke of her brother's ways, he must listen sweetly to her words—as true to herself and her world—and not too seriously apply them.

Pure Tom all this. But only Cornelia knew it.

"What on earth are you trying to do with him?" she asked her brother.

"My dear Cornelia, how you talk!"

"Listen!"

There were similarities enough between them. She also could drive full force toward a single point: whip her intensity, till it became almost a deterrent to the average dull person. But Tom could meet her at any pitch. He had one talent which she lacked and he knew this and would ruthlessly exploit it. He had a ready sense of the ridiculous: a light riding mood with which to damper her flame.

Cornelia swung upon him and thrust out her hand; her eyes blazed: "Listen!"

Tom, on the couch, curled his legs under him; he straightened like a schoolboy before his teacher, and threw a mock-serious frown across his face. Cornelia's onslaught could not resist. It turned into argument—argument gradually stiffer, less alive against his mocking.

"David is not fit, Tom, he never could be, for your sort of life." He was still. "What he needs, it seems to me, is a training that will permit him to develop what is deepest and truest in him: his sense of reserve, his great purity of heart. The finest thing about David is his nature's implicit criticism of the life about him." Tom still listened. "If he is flung into a sophisticated life, his own incorrigible innocence will merely thwart whatever he does: while that life goes on thwarting his nature. He will be nothing, arrive nowhere." She stopped.

"You women have a genius for simplifying reality!" Tom threw this out in order to gain time. He knew it would goad

Cornelia into eloquence. Any disparaging generalization on her sex did always.

"Indeed! Well, you men have a genius for complicating reality till it's as false and absurd as a wired and painted and lace-draped lily. A fine botch you've made of your reality. Every step of the world is so cluttered with barbed-wire rules and pitfall standards that only an acrobat can keep his feet. Why don't you answer me? David is no man to go to the top, tricking and beating every one else down, is he?"

"No."

"He is a simple, gentle boy. That's what he must remain." Tom smiled: Cornelia answered his smile. "Fortunately, he has an excellent place at his uncle's. There is design in that. At least, there is luck. It means something. It means the pure and the brave in Davie may have a chance to grow in peace. We need that. We've enough of you acrobats."

Now Tom was ready. "David's lovely sense of right will be as useful, unless it comes in touch with the real world, as a violet under a hedge."

"A violet growing under a hedge is sweeter than a violet crushed in the road."

Tom knew he had talked nonsense. He always did when he would not face the sincere part of him that wished to speak. There was no time to lose. He must tell the truth.

"I am not trying to corrupt him:—I like him, Cornelia: I want him where I can be with him. So long as he stays in his ivory-tower of dreams I cannot have as much of him as I want. But, Sister! I am no prince of darkness. If I have plunged into chaos it is because that is where the money is. I am lonely there as a good angel would be in hell. I won't be with David. I tell you, one can be lonely and untouched even at a Reception, one can be guileless even in a courtroom. I am. These things pass over me like sticks and stones—smarting my skin. I do not want to change

David. I want him near me. I want him to change *me*. Your mistake is the horror you have for surroundings that you know nothing about. A usual result of ignorance, my dearest. David will be as unchanged, certainly, as I."

"Why do you want to drag him into your noisy world?"

"I can't have a friend, by long distance."

"There's something more in it than that."

Tom looked, not to deny but to learn. His face was open, sincerely in search.

"I don't understand," she went on. "If you really wanted him to change you, were willing at all to be like him, you'd meet him half way. I have seen how you ply him with your cynicisms, heckle him with your invitations to 'begin to live.'"

"If I met him half way I'd come back with half a practice."

"Nonsense! You could live your professional life without him. Social demands don't go into one's intimate hours. There is something else. You really want to take David about with you—into the thick of the scrimmage. Every word you say to him is a sort of preparation for his entrance. Why?"

Tom was silent. He loved his sister's trenchancy too well not to admit her points. His doubts brewed energy. He got up and paced the floor to slough it off. "I don't know, I don't know," he repeated. He stopped.

"Cornelia, I may be queer. . . . I guess I am a man of action. What else is there to *do* with him?"

She looked at her brother soberly. She knew he had touched a deep chord.

He went on: "My muscles seem to be very near my nerves. My muscles must move, as soon as my nerves feel. Do you understand? If I am glad, I dance. If I am hurt, even now, I am liable to cry. You know that. Don't you re-

member, Cornelia, at the Farm, when I had made a particularly perfect mud-pie, how I brought it into the house and placed it intact on your table—even though it meant a mess and a licking? It was mine: I had to bring it in to you. Well: David can teach me dreams and truth: but I've made a mud-pie of the world. He must share it. . . ."

He had his days of offensive against Cornelia.

"You want to make a child of him. You want to keep him a child. Motherer!"

"He is a child."

"Aren't you glad?"

"Well, if I am? Mayn't one be happy with something that one finds?"

"What of David? He can't have you for a mother all his life. Some day he will be compelled to sally out."

"Sally out where? He can have me always as much as he has me now. We don't need to outgrow our friends? Really, Tom, you have a vision of the world that compares with Don Quixote's. Giants and windmills."

"Very good, dear incorrigible Motherer." He came close and his arms enlaced her waist: their cheeks touched. "You shall always have your two boys to make behave and keep at your breast. So long as you live." Cornelia swayed with him, smiling. "But between feed-times, you shall let them play in the streets." She struggled away.

"You're horrid—you're cruel!" There were tears as she pushed him off.

Or his days of strategy. . . .

"I am doing my best," he said, "to undermine you with him. There'll not be a shred of you left in his heart, dear Sis, when I've done picking you to pieces." Which was precisely what he was about, and whose telling disarmed Cor-

nelia altogether. Surely, if he were in truth betraying her, he would not be telling her about it. So she reckoned. While David argued that Tom's often disquieting reflections on Cornelia must in some deep way be related with the real love he knew he bore her. With this true, there could not be betrayal.

The two young men were together more and more. They sat in Tom's warm room; their words were of high things. They knew that these were things that were not. Tom knew these things would never be: David that they must. They met in the present of life as two might take hands down an echoing corridor: close, though the one thought at the passage-end was life; the other death.

From these talks came the sense of his emptiness to Tom as he began to feed. He knew it only in the yearn he carried with him more and more for somewhat he lacked, in that nausea for the present which was dooming his love for Marcia Duffield, and making of his professional affairs a clear, cold, removed design that he learned to trace with the tips of his calm fingers. The mood helped him with Cornelia.

He went to her morose, and said kind things—angry things that in their conveyance of his troubled spirit stressed his apartness from David.

"I have been at it again, Cornelia."

He sat abject on her couch, laid his hands on his feet with a gesture of humility in which alone a Hindu could have seen the pride. His eyes dwelt on his sister's cast of a pretty boy—a boy with laughing hair and a face that was a flower. Tom's lips were still. It seemed his eyes that spoke. He loved when he came to Cornelia's place to cast off his coat and flare his collar wide from his tense neck. The muscles in his throat seemed over-stressed for the low tone and the small volume of his words.

"Clay is a happy medium," he said. "That boy is nearly enough your boy to make you nearly happy. Clay is a

possible element for our wills to work in. But human flesh, and human mind, Cornelia! They are weighted with a past so deep and so remote we are helpless before it. I know. Remember a joke I used to play on you? The uncut grass by the barn: how I made you try to stand a stick on end whose tip was fastened to an invisible string? And whenever you thought you had it balanced, I'd give a little jerk and the thing toppled?"

She stood off from her figure. She came forward; her finger touched a plane into shadow; she stepped away as if there had been some vital shock in the swift contact.

"Well? . . ." she said, not letting either her words, or his, eat beneath the surface of her mind.

Tom knew he could spread a bath of acid that might take its time in eating downward, yet leave its mark.

"I think, Cornelia, I have the same love as yourself for making forms. But there is something perverse and accursed in me: something that keeps me from spending my appetite on some reasonably complaisant substance, like clay or pigment or even words. Like you. . . . I must of course write my poems in human life. And, Cornelia, it doesn't work." He paused. "I dined with your friend, David, last night." Again a silence. "I ended by running off to a trumped-up engagement because I simply could not stand his bland stupidity any longer."

He got up and took a cigarette and lighted it. It went out at once. "I am a fool," he said.

Slowly he began to tell the wall against which he pressed his cheek, half plaintively, the misery of the man whose medium is action. Cornelia destroyed her boy's nose. She remodeled it. While he talked, crouched with his cheek flat to the wall, she hummed an aria from *Lohengrin*—desultorily, false-simply, with evident satisfaction to herself.

"Is there no mellowness in America? Is there none of the

sweetness of ripe soil? David can be as vulgar as Ruth's carpenter-lover. Sometimes I wonder is the chief product of American activity to be sweat. Bah! We sat there: and David lectured me. To the effect that truth and beauty are antagonistic and we must side with truth. When I asked him what was truth, he answered: 'Morality is true.' When I asked him, 'Pray what might Morality be?' he said: 'If you don't know, you ought to be ashamed of yourself! If you are going to be flippant, we'd better go back to our last subject.' And, Lord of Hosts! our last subject had been *Balzac!*'"

Tom was gone. Gone so abruptly, the door stayed a-jar behind him.

Quickly Cornelia threw the damp cloth over her model and seated herself on the couch; she held her head tight in her two hands. Her mind was quick with the sharp-eating lines of her brother.

"They will never get along. Never. Never. They are so different: as different as . . ." She stopped: she said to herself that this was her brother whom she loved, and how could she think unkind thoughts of her brother? It must not be. In the stifed conflict, she was moved. She got up, flung wide a window.

Night. It was cold. Gas-lamps blinked and strutted through the air. Their lights were false: they brought out only darkness. The street lay low and reeled and swung away on either side like the deck of a pitching vessel. The vessel was the world. It crashed through a sea of love that spumed upward to Cornelia's eyes. Her heart's heat condensed it; there were tears. She had a sense of the bleak urgency of life: of its passage and of its passengers. She had a sense of the element through which she and those she loved and the vessel plunged: how it was a sweet element and dim and how hard it was not to forget. Surely, all thought in her cold day was a denial of the Sea through which life

was a passing: denial of all save the vessel: denial of the terror of its movement and of its passionate immersion. She, also, forgot. She, also, was a coward with the rest before such words as "religion," or as "mystic." The salty tang of this Sea beyond her plunging little world was in her eyes and her mouth: all her body wept silently. . . .

The cadenced strokes of an elevated train knocked at her mind. The truth faded.

Cornelia brushed back her hair from her brow. "You are a silly woman," she said aloud. "He doesn't care for you really. You don't really care for him. He will go away, and marry. He lives after all in a different world. Tom and I will console each other."

She was relieved at her brother's bitter mood. She was weary, as if she had been on a great journey. She lay on her couch and closed her eyes. . . . The air of her room was thick and was running in massive current. She felt herself swept along. The tickings of the clock on the mantel tore past her and caught in her dress like little strayings of straw. The air surged over her head; she saw a house flung upon its current and dipping across her window. Where she was it was quiet. Tom came up to her; in his hand was a gleaming scalpel. "I am going to mold David's face," he said. She said: "You can't, Tom, because he is done: I have done him already." Cornelia looked at her model of a boy: it was all wet: suddenly it sprang and David threw himself upon the ground, and broke. Her father stood over her hurting her wrists. Her wrists hurt in his fierce grasp: but she felt how her father had no hands and was armless. He stood towering beyond her, high, and hard like a stick. Cornelia knew that a string was attached to him, and that Tom held the string: he was going to jerk it, and then her father was going to fall. She was afraid: her father was going to fall on her and she would be crushed. She saw that he was a child, she was



full of pity. Her face was upturned toward him. He was above her. She felt she was going to kiss him. . . . Over her eyes, there was David, peering through turbulent shadows into her, curious to see, since her eyes were open and she was not asleep, why she had not heard him enter. . . .

The mood held. She remained in that palpitant hinterland where all the nerves and senses of herself met all the beings of her past. David impinged sweetly upon this swerving world. She lay, scarce breathing, looking at him with eyes that denied the rest of her.

The world where he could thrust in his head without violence receded. It went. Again, her senses were enemies, strangers. That was a man to whom she had not given herself. Her senses stormed her recovering mind. "Why does he not take me in his arms?" they pleaded. She was on her feet, shutting herself away.

"How you frightened me, David! I guess I fell asleep." In her panting words, she was gone from him. She could dare to say: "What a pleasant surprise, your coming! I am so glad you came." She gave him her right hand: the left hand followed. He held them both: she drew them from him.

"I thought I would chance it. Have you had dinner? . . . What were you dreaming about, Cornelia?"

She laughed, her low, stalwart laughter. "What would you imagine?"

"You looked so strange, so far away. As if you were in a spell. Even now, you are not quite out of it."

"I was in myself, I guess."

"You won't tell me what you dreamed?"

She looked at him.

Big, burly boy, with his blue muffler over his throat and his hands hanging so limp beside him. He was so at ease, so friendly curious, so cool. While she was white inside with the need of telling. It was impossible. In the shadow, a

pain viced Cornelia's homely face—lent accent to the wrinkles already upon her brow. It went, leaving its sharp bite.

"How have you been, David?"

He might still ask her, force her to tell him. . . . David began to talk. He rambled along the flowered paths of his own green life. He forgot about her dream, he forgot about Cornelia. As her chance of self-bestowal, of drawing him back with her to the self-land she had left, faded before his dear indifference, Cornelia's hands were fists, her soul retracted with hurt. . . . He chatted.

She left him to put on her hat. She saw herself in the mirror: plain Cornelia, Motherer! who had found her boy at the age when boys go forth. Her mouth affirmed the bitter resolution that must make it hard: her eyes fought against their tears—David was there—with a dry will that must dull and dim them. The ineffable glow of confidence and of the sense of being sweet faded still farther from her face, leaving it older and less sweet.

So she returned to David: they went out to dine.

## VII

THERE were times when the two young men sat in silence, looked at each other: and Tom was depressed and beaten by the world: he needed comfort of his friend. Then, out of the silence, David talked. A new way he had of bending low in his chair with one leg curled beneath it, the other straight out, while his arm rested on the forth-stretched knee and his palm turned upward. He would talk low then, try to give to Tom a thing he was not sure he had himself, and was not sure but that Tom had far more than he. He believed he was recalling Tom merely to his own possession.

"Think of what you have done in your life! You should think of that."

"What have I done? What does it matter what I have done? What am I?"

"You conquered your life, you made a new one for yourself."

"David, our deeds are not ourselves. We are what we are, not what we do. Our deeds, if anything, are what we have thrust from us. If I have done much, I am the emptier."

"Are you not always living and being anew?"

"I am engulfed in a vicious world whose viciousness I know. I am false, David. I play dirty games, dirty tricks. I do my share of the betraying of the world, before I get my share of the thirty pieces of gold. You do not know. I have open eyes. I betray, loving loyalty: I do dark work, loving the sun."

Tom was up from his chair. "Look at this flat!" He

parted the curtains of pale lavender that subdued the room to a quiet steadfast chromatic scale. It was afternoon of Sunday. Swift and passionate the sun came in. It made the curtains tremorous with fire: it cast a radiance upon the cream-dun walls. It sang through the room, with light feet tripping the soft rug, with tawny fingers touching the books and the vases. . . . Tom and David sat within miracle.

Tom's voice was dark in the sunlight.

"This rare thing," he said, "who can purchase the sun in the city? Not your saint, not your artist and lover! Only creatures like me who serve darkness. The Law that I serve lives in shadowy dusty places. Its priests are men too crafty and bent to be honest thieves. So I have the sun. And, David, I love the sun. I hate what I must do to earn it. I am a man who can keep his love only with gold that he gains by his love's prostitution."

The last splendor of day. The sun's arms turned upward, suppliant in death. The vast Star sank beneath crumble of buildings. Tom and David shivered at the eternal surcease.

"I feel that the sun some day of its own accord will go from me because of what I do against it. . . . Go at midday, as it has gone just now."

New shadows rose, they were silent like lips that have just spoken. The glow was gone from the room: it throbbed still in their minds. A flower faded.

David said: "I wish, Tom, I could help you."

Tom did not smile.

"I feel you are unjust to yourself. Perhaps unjust to the world also. It can't be as evil as you paint it. As for you, I know how far you are from what you say of yourself. You deserve the sun, Tom."

Tom did not move.

"Just think! Over there, in the East—those black belching

houses where you say they slaughter cattle and brew hops—the sun will rise to-morrow. Before you awake.”

“Where do you get your idea of the world?” . . . A sharp question. It left David blunt.

“I can’t explain. It’s not reasoned out. My idea of the world I guess is chiefly what I feel.”

“And what do you feel? . . . Your own past of feelings, that is what you feel. Your mother, your easy village life alone with your mother. Nine-tenths of it.”

“Well: isn’t that life as well as this?”

“It’s dream!”

“I do not see the difference very clearly. . . . My mother was: and my love for her. They are more real to me than the hardness of the city. Perhaps, Tom, it is the hardness of men which is dream.”

“If your love and your life with your mother are reality, lean on them now.”

“I live with them, Tom.”

Tom walked up and down.

“I leave you in your dream, David. I want to. But some shock of the outer world will come and wake you. You are walking in your sleep. I want gentle hands to bring you to yourself, at a safe moment, at a safe place. Lest you fall, David.”

David was up also. They faced each other: the tall gentle unkempt boy and the sharp sure measure of Tom: the boy with bright slow eyes, against the weary quickness of the other.

“I may be more right than you.” David’s voice was low. It had a full cadence of shaded notes. “I don’t think what we reason out is always sure. I can’t explain. I believe that just the same.” About his low voice the room darkened. What was light and certain of the room was the spirit of the friends grappling within shadows.

David was speaking. "When I think, Tom, that there are millions, hundreds of millions of men and women: each of them has feelings deep like mine, feelings of doubt and happiness and sorrow. It seems very wonderful to me that the world should be so rich. . . . I used to wonder about God. It didn't seem to me likely that there could be one Mind who knew all about the billions of people that there have ever been, be interested in them, know what was good for them, love them. But I don't feel like that any more. This huge sea of feelings, made up of so many billion seas—well, that is true, and that is quite as wonderful as the idea of God."

"Do you think they all feel as you do?"

"Of course they do. I know that really I am no more than the rest. I know how huge my own feelings seem to me."

"But most of them are luckless, David, stupid victims,"

David looked wondering: "They strike me as wonderful," he said. "Every thing! People aren't stupid at all. Perhaps rulers and philosophers are stupid. I don't know. I don't know how they work. I know that no stupid man could make a chair or plow a field. And a woman, Tom, who can give birth to a child that will grow up is not a stupid woman. Think, there are billions of women who have done that! All these things seem marvelous to me. Language! Think! The little mute creature who comes into the world, and in a few years he can talk. Is that stupid, Tom?"

David was near Tom's desk. His hand lay on a flat, blank piece of paper, and an inch rule of thin, varnished wood. He picked them up.

"Look at these, Tom. Don't you think they're fairy-tales?"

Tom was smiling. But he was warm. "Compared to what some men have thought and done, all men are stupid. The first man who made paper had intelligence, yes. But the dull million imitators?"

"I don't know how to make paper. It is all a mystery to me."

"You could buy a book for a dollar, and read a few hours and know all about it. Is that achievement, to you?"

David was silent.

"Men are a race of monkeys. All of them, David. A few among them now and then who have the genius to create. Freaks. The apes harry them to death, then they follow them. They are no less apes because they steal and follow. Take from the annals of man the deposits of the lonely exceptions and they'd go groveling and dumb, as they did five hundred thousand years ago. Do not admire men, David. Admire the wondrous diseased and solitary freak who at times is born among them, who rises above them: who has given to the monkey-clan all the stolen toys they clutter their lives with. Paper seems a miracle to you. That is sheer ignorance: sentimentalism, if you will, which is the same. Look what the monkeys do with this paper: how they degrade and defile what the creators of paper destined for the recording of holy words. You can give a monkey a jewel, but he'll hide it in his refuse, or he'll decorate some obscene portion of his body with it. Is that not just what has taken place with the jewels of intelligence and genius? The plow is a miracle. But the average plowman is a slave who has debased both plow and soil. What has he done with the sacrament of the harvest? He has let his soil that should be to him as the woman he loves be stolen from him: he works it for hire: he sells its fecundity to ugly masters. The lot of women is a lovely thing. But how do women conceive? What do they do with their children? You marvel at language. What do you think of what men say? No, David: yours is an old sentimental fault. Through the ages great lonely spirits have worked for good: they found the uses of fire, they invented the wheel and the sail, the arrow and the lever. The swarms

from whom they differed as gods from maggots took their generous gifts and turned them against life. Much of the march of civilization is the abject record of just this bitter process. The dull creature who drives your cab—how is he related to the hero that tamed the shaggy stallions of the Stone Age? or to the poet that dreamed The Wheel? Would the priest whose ecstasy brought forth fire be the friend of the janitor downstairs who tends my furnace—or of the filthy fool that cooks my dinner? What relationship beyond that joining the parts of a colossal joke binds the prophet who first pressed papyrus and the degenerate editor who buys his paper by the ton, dirties it with his lies and sells it to the herd for three cents each morning? Or binds a Shakespeare with the geese that have been quacking about him ever since he died? You have no right to admire the debased relics of greatness—their parodies. To do so is to do precisely the opposite of what you think: to flout the spirit that alone deserves your wonder. Look what the world of men has done. They have so perverted the gifts of the great that no free man can longer partake of them. Their vileness has a monopoly in the fruits of genius.”

“I can’t feel that.”

Tom was bitterly happy. He rushed on. “Well, tell me then: could your ideal artisan work in a factory? He worked with his soul and his hands, the artisan you might admire. It was his love that spoke as he worked; as he sat lost in the magic of his tools, his hands touched the wood with a caress from which came beauty. Machines and trade-union rules would make short shift of him! There is no place in labor for the man who wants to love while he works. Or your farmer—your true breeder of the earth—can he plow a hired field and then truckle with parasite middlemen to sell and adulterate his fruits? What must his attitude be to the loafer who ‘owned’ his soil and to the loafer who ‘handled’ his



products? And the poet-priest that loved his paper and placed the mystery of his love on it—where would you have him write his love to-day, in the Dailies or the Magazines? Where would you have him sing and act his love, in vaudeville or the 'legit'?"

"I am not up to reasoning with you, Tom. Not yet. But I shall be."

"Am I wrong?"

"I am certain you are wrong. I feel these things—love and brotherhood—the many people somehow creating and creating. I am stupid, perhaps?"

"You are not stupid, David."

"Then they aren't stupid either! Any of them. They are just like me. They are not so very different from poets and inventors. I feel that. You say I am not stupid."

Tom took David's hands. "I am the stupid one. That is why I need reason. Dear, confident boy. Please convince me!"

He looked hard, almost fiercely into David's eyes: dimly glowing they were, or rather their sentiment than themselves, in the shadow. . . . Tom's hands hardened over David's. . . . David grew aware of a faint unease that was sharp against the sweetness of his mood. Something imperceptible drew back in him: blanched. Tom felt the withdrawal: he dropped David's hands—suddenly: almost he flung them from him. He stepped back and sat on the couch. His hands held his head so that they did not tremble. His voice came vibrant from the darkness.

"Do not listen to me, David. Though I out-talk you a thousand times, it is you who are right. I am of an old travel-weary race that has lost its gods and that has found no others. I feel you young and fresh beside me, though in our years there is no great difference. Your childhood was not full of false beliefs. You are strong now to go in search

of your own dear Mystery. I have cast off false gods. But their hands were about my heart: and my heart went with them. They are indeed discarded and dead. But my heart is dead along."

David came through the room: it seemed a cavern as he made these paltry steps to Tom. He sat beside him. Still, he was ill-at-ease. He felt so suddenly strong, and stronger than his friend. While Tom talked, it had been hard for him to master the despairing sweep of impotence over his body as his mind. Now again, coming of his strength beside his friend, he felt a chord draw him, held outside himself; so that his coming was weakness. This could not be. Surely, it was good to sit beside his friend and comfort him, to be glad of the mystic glow that touched from their two bodies and made him feel Tom's breathing, made him feel the palpitance of Tom's thought like a butterfly in his close-cupped hands.

Tom said: "Sitting beside me, you are sitting beside nothing."

David was still.

"At the heart of me, David, there is an empty place. What you call my success has been a violence wrenched from me. David, have you ever walked along a country-road, taken a flower in your hand that grew beside it—pulled, hoping as you walked on to unearth it by its roots: and have you ever found in your hand a pitiful crumpled heap of petals and pollen, with the nude stalk still fast behind you in the ground?"

"I wish I could reason out how wrong you are. I suppose for you I would have to make a very clear argument. My feeling does not help you."

"Are you sure?"

"If I am downcast, argument to prove I am all right is not the thing I want. I am different from you."

"Perhaps not in all things different, dear David."

"I know you are wrong! I have watched you. We are friends, now, for so long a time. I could have told you this, almost when we met—when I paddled you about and you let your wrists play in the water and sprinkled me. You have a funny habit, Tom, of hurting yourself. Lord knows why you should like to! You are not satisfied with the world because you are so much better. It is no sin, Tom, to live in the world where we were born. It is splendid that you have such dreams of a far better one. Your life proves how true and real you have been—perhaps more so to Cornelia than to yourself. I am sure you would be the same for me."

"I could do anything for you."

"I have nothing with which to cure you of your black doubts except a stupid faith that does not touch you."

"Davie, it is the best in you. Give me the best in you. I want nothing better in all the world. . . ."

Silence inclosed them, again.

David struggled with what he deemed his impotence. He was not very bright, he feared. Perhaps he failed to feel the stupidity of men because himself was stupid. Tom would not tell him that. A wave of the need of giving welled about him. He was warm and relaxed within this element whose indeterminate grain moved him toward Tom. . . . He relaxed. The same easeless stir, moving to stiffen him back, poison this sweetness, to make him one again with his threatened solitude. David struggled for the quickening of himself in self-bestowal. Tom sat in darkness, bitter, hard, his will a clenched fist over his body. With a strain so true that the muscles in his neck stood out, he strove to turn away from his loved friend.

But his hand went forth: his knotted hand that seemed beaten by the weathers of life went forth as on a journey hazardous even to its wisdom. It tremored close to the hand of David . . . the warmth of the young hand made it cold.

A sharp shrill voice that sounded a shriek in the darkness. "Let's have a light," Tom jumped up.

In the yellow of the gas, David sat blinking. Tom was all movement. He flung off his shoes, put on another pair. He changed his necktie. He hung away his house coat. He stood dressed for the street.

"I must be off," he declared. "Which way do you go?"

He was decreased to a more comfortable pitch by this let of energy: he came to David; with both hands half-helped him from his seat.

They had been long in darkness: in darkness some strange light from each had played upon them. Now at the mundane level of the gas-lamp, they stood and needed to look into each other. Their eyes were venturesome, but their darts of laughter proved them timid. They stirred: their bodies and their minds: swerving away. As if they dangled loose from one another and were close-fastened only by their eyes. . . .

David walked yearful through the City. It seemed sure to him that his heart was empty. He cared for no one. He was a speck caught in a petty whirl that gulfed him quite as whole as if an ocean had risen to immerse him. Happenings of the day and of all other days lay in the back of his head in a shadowed corner where he flung what he was too weary to dispose of: the corner of a curiously cluttered room that had no dear thing in it. So, walking the wild City, it was to David.

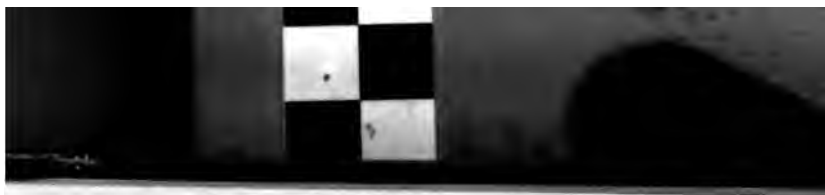
He stood in a great Square and heard New York. Low, brittleness of wagons, liquid hoof-blow of horses sweet against the opaque call of drivers, beat of the herds of men driven by iron streets. High, murmur of lamps wreathing with air that dropped like weight of sadness from the sky: weary air, sinking to the City streets of its own helplessness, in love with the warm lamps that turned away from such anguish. The

buildings hummed their tune of mastership. But these were low: was low the plaint of the air that was being breathed and defiled by the herds of men. Under all was the City: above all was the City's voice. David stopped still and heard it. A sudden, solitary shriek, coming from afar, dying, born anew. . . . The City hurried and did not hear itself.

David walked again. The cry was gone. He was deaf also: doubting, forgetful.

He walked to the house of the Tibbetts, where he was due to dinner. A warm hall: carpeted stairs leading up like a schemer's invitation: balustrades that flourished and bold flat pictures that grimaced against walls with the effrontery of servants. The door closed. David stood on the thick carpet and felt the harsh mahogamous gleam, the cushioned unresilience of chairs, the obtuse blindness of leathered walls. He felt this Fay and her mother, how they were hard and soft: the black sleek fatness of Mr. Tibbetts moved against him, held out wide hands to take him in. A forbidding brutal gloss, like the woodwork, sheathed a softness, a *give* of sentiment and thought no more alive in these people than the red plush of the sofa. . . .

All of it was suddenly obscene to David. He was in the mood he had found once in a house of prostitution: he had entered with a fellow from the Office in stern response to passion: he had fled as one flees in a nightmare. The Madame within the harsh green satin of her kimono, which was a mold for flaccid flesh: the hard faces of the women, the hard pastiche of their gestures upon which the flabbiness of their souls and the unexercised pulp of their minds came out, oozed out—David caught himself. What nonsense with these good friends asking him questions! What had that memory to do with this? He walked deliberately into the mood of the Tibbetts: he forgot his nausea, as he had forgotten the voice of the City.



## THE DARK MOTHER

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But Tom he could not forget. His forgetting all else brought him inevitably to Tom. He was warm and alive with Tom. He felt that in Tom's friendship more than in all else—more than in his work downtown or the slow reading of good books—he was growing up. He glowed with Tom as one might smile at the accomplishment before one's eyes of a good prophecy.

All his life he had known that he was destined to become a man. An ecstasy, this, of wonderment and terror which ran, in a kaleidoscope of color, back to his childhood and to the time when his little arms had clasped his mother's knees. *Some day he would grow up and be a man.* Whenever he heard these words inside him, they came by his mother's voice. For she had brought them first like a fire to his life. She had burned him with them as a reproof, or thrilled him with their glow of destiny, or when her slow hands and her mouth upon him told of their imminent loss, lighted him as a sacrifice with their mysterious meaning. For in these words was a world beyond his mother. In them, coming from her mouth and from her breast that he loved, David knew the ruthless rhythm of his life away from childhood up to the passion of maturity: away from his mother to a motherless cold land for his own mastership. This destiny could be many things. It was a twinkling star he looked at from his safe world and laughed against: it was a fairy-field near only in his fancy, far from his being, dominioned by the will of his young ignorance: it was a menace from which he fled to his mother and toward which the vigor of his mother's love yet drove him.

He stood at his manhood's threshold, not daring to turn back. A deep and cavernous beginning. A passage lost in shadows. Not seeing the passage, he dared to enter. His mother's going had been the bidding of her love that he should leave her. But David was not alone. A part of him was still the

short and sturdy child that clasped his mother's knees. All this was changed, and all this was eternal. For now, again, David was not alone. Tom who had shown him the coming of his manhood would accompany him through it. . . . His friend and comrade: though David knew it not, in a way marvelously true and false the legate of his mother.



## VIII

**D**AVID lived alone for a little more than a year. Already in that year's Spring the two friends decided to find a place together.

Their living room opened from a narrow hall. Along a darkness, sidling, their two bedrooms, symbols of our forbidding attitude toward sleep as a dull thing crowded between bright periods of bustle. They blinked, these rooms, with their hopeless single eyes flat on the gray bricks of the adjoining house: blinked like purblind old women against something too close for focus. Here, sleep was imprisoned, that might heal men from the poison of their days, but that men have turned into a merely deeper and more occult brew of their days' poisons.

The room where the sun came was the room they thought they lived in. Their home, that: though they spent far less hours there than in the blinking sleep rooms, and though, of course, the sun was usually there when they were not—they who weighted each day into the City as miners go down shafts. But it was good to know the sun was there even with them away: they had hunted long for a southward room. The resilient Mrs. Lario, with her bare arms giving to no touch and her smooth throat so palpably immune from the gust of a man's passion, above the tight composure of whose eyes brooded her hair like a black tempest of contradiction, came and cleaned. She turned the mattresses: she sprinkled water for the dust of the crumbling floors. She made the rooms gleam with a moist complacency like her own widowed virtue. But then, beside Mrs. Lario, came the sun: dried the moisture



of her mop, turned all this artificed cleanness that smelt so of its triumph over dirt into a health that glowed, self-sustainedly, without a hint of being mere reform. The sun came and balanced Mrs. Lario; and made her possible. So that when Tom and David were up, ruffled and wearied, through their shafts at night, they felt that their home had been not cleaned alone but redeemed also. And if there was a flavor of must in the tidied bedrooms, the rococo sitting of the pillow-shams, the somewhat chromo-patterned regularity of things left on their bureau, there was as well good air, still a-thrill with the sun's last coming. On Sundays, they greeted the sun as one they knew, who knew their home better than they: greeted him a bit like a familiar god with his long frank strides shattering their windows.

David was making a success in his uncle's business. He had at last achieved a salary determined rather by his place in the office than his relation with its head. Mr. Deane's theory had unconsciously been one of compensation. He balanced his knowledge of the boy's advantage by miserable pay. This enabled him quite honestly to say: "David gets no more than any other beginner." An easy way of feeling just. Now David was beginning to lead the life of a young bachelor in the City. He had outgrown his little Eastside room: he was after all a representative of the Deanes. If he went to the theater, it was not right that he should sit in the gallery like a clerk. If he went hunting for rooms with this smart chap Rennard, he must not, by an admission of the low price he could afford to pay, reflect on the House of Deane. Mr. Deane was a little on his mettle with his nephew as most men with their sons. He was approaching the time of vicarious satisfaction. He made David assistant to the Credit Department, and gave him a good salary.

David knew the nepotic alloy in his good fortune. It did not trouble him. He thought, somehow, he deserved it. He

recalled vaguely an old remark of Tom's about another matter. "Men who get what they deserve always do so, you will find, for inappropriate reasons." David was letting the sweet illogic of America come in on him. He was lost in wonder at the perfect and complex weave of manifest occurrence which armored the reality, latent and different, beneath. The weave was one of grace, good will and beauty. It was in contradiction to the moving nakedness he felt fatefully aswing below his life and the whole City. He was after all in much a child: one who wanted the world to be good to him: to whom the real was the most splendid of fairy-tales. He fitted into this social structure so close akin to the land where hags turn into princesses and pumpkins become coaches. He was that sort: the sort who wanders blithely through an enchanted forest where great black trunks of trees stand under a green sea of murmur like protective stanchions and who picks up an acorn, finds it to be a golden apple, eats it with neither indigestion nor surprise. The whirling petulance of American life, its oneness with the tempo and technique of the dream, was very near and very sweet to David.

There was then a true immersement of David in this world. And in this fact a danger. Nothing is so rebellious as reality. No man who does not first move with the world can change it. If the deep mute sense of life in David pushed ever upward in revolt, that revolt would be the mere fused head of all his being: of the world's: it would find its articulated deed. He would go farther, infinitely, in rebellion, than the rebellious Tom whose mental area of understanding kept him in a sort of passionate inertness. The emotions of Tom Renard were conservative: the part of him that loved loved what was still and plumbed—and *there*; the manifest world he found rather than its latency of change. Only his mind ventured ahead into potential realms. His mind was much

like a courier at work in advance to fit and to pare down conditions for the advent of his master.

So Tom felt a hazard in his friend. He wished to live in the world that he found. He wished to live with the friend that he had found. It was needful, therefore, that his friend should live there also: that he should change just in so far as to fit Tom's world, yet not so greatly change as to be no longer David. Tom realized that the world's acceptance he desired in David, and its possession he feared, were very close to one another. He looked at his friend, and wondered. . . .

David lay back in his rocker, with his legs out straight and the mist of his pipe rising above his upturned head. He was comfortable: above his waist his body huddled in a condition of collapse that made the rigid straightness of his legs and of his arms falling down by his side a comical diversion. Tom looked at him from his rush seat chair, direct and simple. He sat at ease, straight. He picked a paper from the floor, but below his waist his posture was unaltered. His head moved on his neck like a hinge: his torso moved on his hips like a hinge. There was David reaching for a match: his legs shifting, his chin dropping upon his chest.

David's arms went out, and he yawned. His body was rigid. It seemed to press out the energy of words: "Oh—O! I am sleepy."

Tom laughed. He had come in far later—from a dance. He had been up an hour earlier. "Why don't you lie down, then?"

David's eyes seemed to exercise command over his sluggish state. They thought the idea a good one. The big body lifted heavily from the chair, went wide and down to the floor. David lay on his back. Tom looked at him. He could have raised his foot and placed it on David's stomach. One hand, palm upward, slumbered directly beside Tom's chair.

Tom could have stepped on it. The temptation ran humorously through him.

"Why you should be sleepy, my dear man! I'll bet you slept ten hours."

"Well," after a pause, "it's Sunday."

Tom laughed again. "You're still a lazy country lout."

David snorted and smiled. He rolled his generous round head away from Tom and closed his eyes. Since his eyes alone had borne the quality of resistance that was his space in the world, David lay prone and altogether passive: he was a little like a flame that has been extinguished.

Tom began to contemplate his friend. David breathed deep and low. Looking and pondering, Tom came to breathe in unison. His shorter, tighter body made this anomalous. They breathed together. But David was sleeping. Tom's breath brought him discomfort. A tithe of it he discharged by stirring his foot to within an inch of David's hand. It stayed there. He was forward in his seat. His gaze went forward fixed on some vague moving object that swung in a pure parabola away. All of him followed.

They had been together a month. There was David's face fallen away on its side. Tom could see the slight strained tendons of his neck. His sleepy hair was a mood apart from the floor it touched like a mist thrown from the alert earth in the morning. His pipe had slipped and cast its ashes. Tom wondered if he was closer to his friend after a month, and how far closer he could grow. This the question he followed. As if in search of it, he leaned agilely forward, immersed, and picked up the pipe next to David's hand. He was again erect in his chair. He held the pipe before him. Not seeing it. He was very awake thinking. Suddenly he looked at his hands, amazed. They were empty. The pipe was in his mouth. On his face came an expression of motion, as if he wanted to get away. He thrust the pipe back of

him, on the tabaret. Again, rest came to his features. They no longer strained in the symbol of the need to move. He was in contemplation. His lips parted and pursed at a faster tempo than his breathing. His eyes hardened. He took a long draught of air as if his sluggish breathing had half stifled him. Once more he breathed at his wonted measure.

He looked down at David, for the first time naturally: as if David were this expected object at his feet, and not some threshold beyond them. . . . They had been after all a mere month together. Why was he counting time with David, when elsewhere he was glad to take his days in gross, and the thought of the years like steps of a painful stairway to be mounted toward the flat respite of death? In this lingering with David and his hurry elsewhere, there was a discord, a whirling that made him dizzy. One part of him moved faster than the rest. He turned and turned around. Tom's eyes were seeking again. He must hold on to something to stop this spinning. His jaw dropped an instant, before he had caught himself up. There were his hands once more athwart his chest: in them David's pipe. Tom jumped from his chair. Carefully, however: David was sound asleep.

It was a day of clouds low-scudding over the City.

The City crouched hostile and sharp, as if it felt the universe its foe. The City of men. With its roofs like an up-standing fur, it lay there, a cattish monster. The wind boomed afar, plunged near, whistled and shook the windows and was off screaming with fright at its courage. The City was tense and cold under its houses. A lighter shadow cut down from the retreated pall of the skies. The sun was up there somewhere. The shadow mushroomed forth, losing its lightness, swelling with relief into the wider darkness: disappeared. The City breathed again. Another shaft of light, of greater vibrance, lanced it, made it quiver, faded

once more. These alternations were a rhythm, like breath, on the City. And in the room, where Tom stood looking out and David slumbered, these rhythms were compressed and sharpened. The swathes of lighter shadows—strugglings of the sun—brought unrest. The City was easier in the greater gloom. Was the sun what it feared? The gloom was a cloak, hiding the foe. When it parted a sword flashed. When it parted, the City trembled.

Tom felt the acerb coldness of this maze of stone and brick. A testaceous monster crouched beside the hidden Hudson. It lost its unity: it broke into parts. The City became a swim of brittle points, a sea and a foam of iron. Tom wondered how the soft breasts of the dwellers had conceived their City that was more hard and hostile than the whipped heavens. He saw them under the mountains of their handicraft like shell-less creatures huddled in a mountain of waves.

He was back from this fury to his chair. There slept his friend. He was aware of David gently asleep and of the surge of the City and of the skies a humor of hostile motion. He was aware of all this suddenly at once. The contrast was like swift heat on the smooth surface of his consciousness. It cracked. In the fissures light to see by. . . .

The deposits of his last summer. He had gone away, for his two weeks, alone. This was his custom, and the one who might have led him to disregard it was unwilling. David had earned the respect of Mr. Deane by declining to take a vacation. He might have gone, as the year before, to spend it in the mountains with his uncle's family. He had no stomach to. He was very far from Lois. He believed she was engaged, though he had purposely avoided the confidence she almost forced him to ask.

"You don't seem to want to know anything about me, David."

"What is there to know?"

"There might be many things. Why don't you ask? Then you may find out."

"What could there happen to you?"

"Oh, indeed, sir! So nothing could happen to me to interest *you*!"

David thought she was inviting him to bare his breast for her knife-thrust. He was long past the desire of sensation from Lois at the expense of pain. He looked dull. And Lois stamped her feet. "Then I shan't tell you. Now!"

Tom had suggested a plan. But he was half-hearted about it. He did not want to go to the old place with his friend. He did not want to go with him elsewhere. He went off alone. He selected the seashore. There seemed nothing strange in this. He thought it was the turn of the sea. Here too he did not altogether understand. He was afraid to tempt the old place with David. Surely he would not enter it alone.

He went through a little huddled city, sweating and plethoric with high-colored houses and swift dilapidations: a city with the face of a slovenly fishwife, peeled by the summer sun and cut by the winter winds.

Beyond it the beach: a great golden girdle beneath the quiet bosom of the sea. The ocean breathed gently there. It rose and fell passionless and sweet, touching the word of men with virginal disdain. The sun smiled aslant, as if half turned away out of compassion for the feebleness of men. But despite its clemency, the human swarm was like a pullulant emanation in a rich yeasty substance. Women and children and men shifted like black maggots in the luxuriance of summer.

The sea rose from the night as a jewel glows and burns beyond itself. The sun swung into the sky and made of it a luminous flood that poured gold on the beach, splintered mazes of sapphire, emerald, bronze on the breasting waters. Yet of itself the sky was no color and no thing. The sun

fevered and sank away, leaving the sky a-tremble with its passion. The sky lingered, lost in the haze of the sun's mystery, given to the rapture of remembrance that is night.

Within this stillness the broken hurry of people. Men and women were a low spawn flecking and feeding on the universal fragrance. Tom walked among them and tried to amuse himself. Never had human life been so distasteful to him, so anomalous.

He rose early to escape it. A line of boarding houses and hotels lay along the sand. A motley strewing. High barracks with false Colonial fronts and rococo pillars scarfing their dismal heights. Smug cottages burdened with great names: *Sea-Crest, Manning Arms, The Breakers*. Sprawling, winging frames with turrets that twirled and were picked out in colored glass. . . . On the beach, when Tom set out, a sparse sprinkling of children. Mothers gossiped low in the background and a few bathers, loosed from the conventional bonds by the tart spell of the water, screamed, laughed, gesticulated, bounded. Tom left them behind. The sea combed back and the dwellings of men were lost. All about, flatness. The grass ran silver away across salt meadows that were ruddy in sun.

The sea was broken here. It lapped idle, and was green and halted by the blue purl of the river that came out to be lost in the sea's freedom. The bay was quieter than the scudding grass that marged it. There was a rocking stillness everywhere against which the earnest and sharp sally of the pipers in the sea-weed was a dissonant shred. Here Tom threw himself down and took the pungent air into his eyes and mouth and let it moisten the strain of his body. He was immersed in the sweet summer.

A mood grew on him. He learned of a mistake that he had made. Upon the contrast and the stillness of this place came something from without and filled it and made its song.



He found that he was longing for the comradeship of David.

Sitting idle and full of the sap of the summer, he found that the part of him which warmed him was straining outward, toward a vague thing indeed—since he wanted no specific thing of David—but with a pull that had no vagueness. He found himself unable to partake of the gentle world he was in. He found himself tangential from it, making of his wish a rod to vault him back into the burning City. He sat musing, half asleep, without sense of time. He dug with his fingers in the sand. He watched a bug voyage from spot to spot with a rapt floating interest. He tried to enjoy a cigarette, with a sense telling him that the air had a sweeter perfume, could he but swing himself to know it. Unease was on him. He consulted his watch and its denotation of the hours was like news from a far country. Impulse to move was balked by lack of desire to go. He stayed, balanced, bored, strangely exhausted with these hours of indolence, glad of the excuse of hunger to make him move.

The beach was bedlam. He went through the throngs, as if he were wading a morass.

Only the buffet of the waves when he swam beyond the breakers gave him a resistance where he could dwell with a certain comfort. But he could not bathe all day. He went in to dinner. A sort of immersement in a black pot where food was. Clatter of dishes, hot stickiness of human motion, flies stuck on paper. It was hard to part the tasteless substance of his neighbors from the sodden stuff he prodded down his throat.

He escaped to the sea. While the populace digested, he could be alone with it. It beat in monotone upon his world: it flayed it. The sea lay there cruelly content, droning its repetitious chant. Until the endless song mounted, terraced, burst in his ears like a vast shout of conquest. Tom felt an invasion. His small body was being swept by a terrene

monster. The sea's laborious approach against his nerves was no relief from the crepitous *guerilla* of the women, children, men, beating their individual sticks and stones upon him. Tom went back to the deserted bay where the sea was less the sea. And, gazing at the watery world, he wondered by what spell the ocean had even been a balm to him: by what strength he had dared love it.

He said aloud to himself in the silence: "Well, leave here. I give you permission. Go somewhere else. If this bores you." He had no answer. He did not wish to go somewhere else. He wished to go back.

He had always loved this being close among the pleasure-toiling people. He had looked forward to the nights. The open theater, garlanded in paper lanterns, the carrousel with its comical rugose rounds of music, the dance-halls by the sea where the salt air swooned in the invasion of shuffled feet, of perfume, of pop and beer. The silent stretches away from the lights where he could see the couples under the moon discovering love, finding for once glad uses for their bodies. All this Tom loved, and for it had come. . . . There was the solemn jay decked in white duck trousers who walked as close as he dared to the girl in frills, with her face simpering down toward her languid feet. [How far her puff sleeves kept him off, how dangerous a sealing of adventure to take her hands! And her lips? Could he have them without the sea rocking upon them and wiping out the future?] Tom would dance with the prettiest girl he could find—then with the ugliest: and chuckle as he discovered the law of compensation unobserved. "She has less looks, no more sense." He would be hero to a gang of boys, buying them soda and ice-cream: confidant of the pendulous matron in virginal crinolines who believed him when he said that he was sure she could dance: you must not let your daughters bully you, madam, into being old! . . . Then aloof, watching the prides,

the passions, the innumerable nonsenses collect, become a single human clutter, astir in a flare of lights, a ribboning of banal music, a haze of sweaty odors. . . . Once more about him silence and at his feet a Sea—musing in its moveless might as if it were all the heavens, all the stars made through some portent palpable to him. It lay there aloof like truth. And he its master since it lay also in his brain. The crowds he had left were a sputter of sand fallen on the sea and gone.

So, once. Now nothing of all this. The world had fooled him. Ashes were in his mind. Yet he could not leave his mind and the world. Ten days Tom moved in this numbness. . . .

Sudden, he went to the station, and sent a wire to David, returned to his hotel, paid his bill. The message was:

"I am coming home. Save supper for me. Will call for you."

. . . He had a sense that if he visited the bay it would be sweet and fertile like a young woman who is warm with the breathing of her body: that if he had stayed to dinner at the hotel, the women's chatter would amuse him, the naughtiness of the children under the frowns of their mothers shine like snatches of song. For he was on the train. . . .

A heavy heated day met him in the City: one of those laden evenings when the air has lost its resilience to throw off the fetid waste poured by the turmoil of life. All that the millions, in grips with the materials of work, have thrown impure into the air remained for the millions to breathe.

But Tom was in high spirits. His ferry had moored him on the west edge of Manhattan an hour before the time to dine. In this coincidence of his train—the one good train to catch after his sudden resolution—he read a happy omen. He would have time to wash at a hotel. He had no fears because of the short notice of his message. David had few engage-

ments beyond occasional visits to his family, very few indeed whose urgency would prevail against the urgency of Tom's wire.

The thought of that urgency. Why was he so pressed to see his friend? He felt no need of explaining to himself. That part of him which appraised explanations seemed content without one—a strange thing in Tom—seemed willing to nod, to say: "Yes. No need of further words. You wanted to see him." But what of the explanation to make to David? He might think the lack of one peculiar? . . . Something just above his ears, in the back of his head, cracked with a swift report like a cleavage in deep ice. It was an instant: it had not hurt. During it, this thought, marvelously elaborate and clear, touched light: he would tell the truth: he would take David to their favorite café—down steps on Sixth Avenue under the booming elevated structure—where his proprietary waiter, Charles, designed him dinners, according to the weather, according to the look in his face, without questions. There they would sit—he would say: "I missed you, David. My vacation was a failure without you. I had to come back to New York to see you." Simple enough, and honest. Yet it had cleaved some icy armor in his brain in order to get free. David would blush. He was so droll, so like a girl with his ready blushing. And what would David answer? Tom walked along with his elastic bound. He was a little like a pony pacer—a svelte small one. David had had the simile. But above the sharpness of his steps, he swam in a mist of fantasy. He believed that his mind would compress this mist, make it clear solid fact. His mind seemed averse—indolent. Perhaps after all, it could not. An illusion of the mist perhaps that it had the substance of the fact-to-be. Tom saved himself from this conclusion: "Don't live it now. . . . There'll be nothing left after you've done imagining." A faint reverberance set in: reaction. "Why

should I not tell him I was anxious to see him? Truth is essential with a boy like David. I can't give him any *other* reason." The steps of David's lodging house were a bit steep.

He found himself outside the door. He was afraid to open. He knocked. He did not think it right to be so ceremonious. He entered.

David was there. Tom went forward with the slain feelings the occasion had given birth to. What he saw was a blight that had drawn the life of his coming. What remained, talking, moving, was a ghost. David was not alone. With him some friend.

"Farmer was alone. I happened to meet him coming up. I knew you would not mind, Tom, if he came along."

"Of course—of course not."

Tom knew that soon he would understand. In order to be polite, he had better delay the moment. Perhaps, he could put it off till he was rid of these two fellows.

"Where shall we go. I'm hungry." David seemed satisfied. He had worried a little perhaps? David put on his straw hat with a despicable slap of his palm.

"Where you say. It makes no difference to me."

Their favorite café—and Charles? David suggested. Tom nodded.

It was a hilarious dinner. Actually. Tom helped it. The Farmer person had an aptitude for puns. He told them with a Carolina accent. Tom knew of him, that he wore a straggly ribbon for a tie—gray and brown—tucked like a shoe-string into the yellow edge of his collar. He knew also that the collar button showed—it was black bone—and an adam's-apple: that the shirt bulged and was half stiff, and wrinkled. Tom knew no more because his eyes rose no higher and no lower. They remained at their horizontal tension.

He packed them off to an extravaganza. No, he could not join them. He simply could not. They would enjoy it with-

out him. One did not go to the theater for company—as one went to dinner. They were gone at last.

Tom was home like a spent arrow. Down the turbulent avenue with the trains clamoring overhead. He took off his clothes. He was exhausted, as if he had run that day, not been carried, to New York. In a moment, he slept.

He woke early and lay in his bed and understood.

David did not know it: he had done this thing with a knowledge surer than knowing. That much was clear. If David had had a doubt as to the true trivial purpose of Tom's telegram, if he had so much as said: "There may be something important" he must have given Tom the chance to tell him. It was plain, David had sensed the lack of a particular business, guessed the purely social nature of Tom's wish: keen willing, without knowing, to avoid it.

Was it stupidity? Tom thought not. The stupid person would not have understood so much. He would have said: "There may be something important." Or, feeling the true inwardness of Tom's importunity, he must have been passive before it. Beneath David's ingenuous behavior, there worked a deliberate negation. That much seemed certain. Part of his will's function it had been to hide from David what it was all about, since his will was willing to cause Tom's distress, and David conscious would not have been willing to cause it. David's innocence a cloak over himself. But the detail of his meeting Farmer? Tom believed that in the wide world of occurrence the searching will could always find material for its act.

The important thing now was to slur over the affair. A great hurt, an inexplicable wound: a pin prick that somehow had touched his heart—one could not talk of such improbable things.

He saw David the next day.

"Really, man, why do you insist on foisting such impossible persons on yourself and me?"

David squirmed. "I can't say I like him either. But he seemed begging to come along."

"He is the dullest man I have seen in a year. I didn't cut short my trip, you know, to dine with your stray cats."

"I suspected you couldn't go him. . . . I knew *something* was the matter. . . ."

. . . That was long since: that could not happen now. Tom sat over his sleeping friend on the floor and had this thought: "He feels differently now." Of a sudden a twinge strangely akin to guilt went through him. What was he thinking about indeed? He had wanted to be with David those idle days. David had not had the same wish so strongly since he had spoiled their first evening together. Perhaps now in a like case he might wish more strongly. What was there unusual—guilty—in that? He had no desire to seal David hermetically from the world. Surely he showed the contrary intentions. Was he not introducing him to his friends? David had had a full ten days, and he ten empty ones. Another time, David might be the eager one. What was he troubling himself about? . . .

David lay still and asleep on the floor. David was up, brandishing his arms, and his eyes sleepless as a day after hours of sun.

"I am off for a spin." David was devoted to his bicycle. "What are you doing this afternoon?"

Tom seemed to search up and down with his head. "I can't think of anything."

"Good! Then, you'll join us on our walk later on. We're going to Bronx Park: and have a supper of popcorn—three colors—hot-dogs and sauerkraut and ice-cream soda."

"Who are?"

"Why, Cornelia and I—and you."

"I don't like the bill-o'-fare."

David's face went a shade less light.

"Besides," Tom caught himself, "I have an engagement. I promised to have tea with Mrs. Duffield. Fennido is to be there. She asked me specially to bring you, too."

"You don't seem to go out as much with Cornelia and me, as you used to."

"My dear fellow, I am getting busier all the time. You know that. If you don't understand, who should? You know that there goes into a date like this something other than free choice." He walked up and down. David stood still. "Will you come?" Tom asked.

"I have this engagement with Cornelia. . . . If you ask Cornelia also." Tom's eyes dropped. He hummed a few high notes of a popular melody. He found his chair, slapped the Sunday paper into its proper folds on his knees.

"One doesn't take one's family to these chatters, Davie. Fortunately, since Cornelia would have to be dragged. How unreasonable you are."

David stood motionless. He was wondering if Tom told all the truth. Tom took the offensive: "I'll be blessed, Davie, if you're not thinking evil things about me now. I don't give enough care to my Sister. I don't bring her enough into my life, into our life." He sat back in his chair and thrust his sharp question into the indecisive vagueness of David's "Not so?"

"Why—I didn't say that. . . . But why do we go out together so seldom now? We three. Why is Cornelia here so little?"

"Why don't you invite her?"

"I always thought that was for you to do."

"The truth is, David, you see Cornelia plenty." Tom had achieved the tune he wanted. He was out of the talk. By stress of David he would manage to remain out. "I have



nothing against your friendship with Sis. I am happy about it. I had something to do with making it, you may remember. It is good for her—and she means a lot. But you must broaden out, man; at your time of life you must not crib yourself, even with a Cornelia. You have no idea of the gamut of human relationships: of their variance and wonder. . . . Why do you think I wished you to come with me, this afternoon? You see how frank I am. Cornelia you can have any time and always. But Laura Duffield will get weary of inviting you to meet her friends, if you continue to show such nimbleness in avoiding her. That is precisely what you need. Yes—a lot more, just now, than you need Sister."

Tom was unanswerable. He did not press the matter further. He read the news. But David later trudging the deserted side-street, between silent walls, could not convince himself there was no answer.

"Cornelia," he said, "come over to our place and spend Wednesday evening."

"I have an engagement, Davie."

"Then come Thursday. Or Friday."

Cornelia stopped. "Let's sit on that bench," she said. "Quick!—before some one else—" Her first remark had been low, serious. A touch of brightness in her last words that made David look at her. As they sat, it was gone.

Carriages flowed before them. Motionless coachmen, immobile ladies, cramped frilled children passed like wooden figures in a carrousel. Only the horses lived. And yet not all of them, since their docked tails and their cruelly reined necks had an air of artifice.

"Listen, David. I want to speak to you. I should love to accept your invitation. But . . ." she stopped.

David felt a strange commotion. Something within him was full of panic, wanted to get away. At most a fraternal fault was going to be found with Tom. Why then did he

have the sense that it was he who was going to be accused—and more still, justly? These gusts of emotion were ridiculous. Cornelia had as yet said nothing. Yet, at that moment, if a man had come up to him and asked: "Is Thomas Renard your friend?" David would have stammered. Cornelia was speaking.

"You know, Davie—it was natural enough—when Tom lived alone, he used always to come to me. I dropped in occasionally to look after him—his curtains or his linen—or of course, if he wasn't well. Then, he'd be bundled over to my place. But I had 'our home.' Now, he has a real, liveable place—the better of us two. But I have the feeling, David, that this has not altered the old custom. Tom does not suggest my spending evenings with you." Having said so little, she was afraid she had said too much. She went on: "Oh, course, he still comes to me."

"Alone, then. We have not been together in your place since Tom is back from his vacation."

"Yes, he comes alone." Cornelia spoke this slowly, pensively. Her next words trembled swift upon each other as if escaping her thought. "I have the idea that perhaps he likes to have his place apart—— It was that way with his old room. When he wanted me, he came to me. He knew, I was not that way: that I was always glad to see him. I guess, don't you think, he still needs his corner for being solitary?"

"But, Cornelia—why then, share a——"

"Oh, that is different, Davie. Women are in the way."

"I don't feel that you are. Cornelia."

"He does. He is a strange dear, you know. He feels that—that women are in the way. He must."

David's inexorable logic was a burden to Cornelia who loved it—even as his candor hurt though she was nursing it. "Then you won't come, next week?"

"Not until Tom asks me. Only the first time I will feel like that. The first time, it seems to me, the invitation had better come from him."

She wanted to talk on. She had so much to ask and to confess. She had not been invited to help fix their rooms. This was a most hurting difference. She had concealed it. She felt that her words with David had been stupid. Better silence than her feeble approach to speaking. What she wanted David to see she had most hidden. All her moods toward him were of that sort. Always, always. If she wanted to give herself, there she was turning away. Of course Tom was not helpless in such a matter as arranging his apartment. He had his own ideas. She had been sure at least that she would be consulted. One afternoon she came: "How do you like things?" They were complete. "Splendidly, Tom." That was all. It was not the artist who was offended. The artist in Cornelia could always be disposed of. But the woman—the sister. She realized that David also had been but perfunctorily consulted. This was still *Tom's place*. Thinking of that Cornelia forgot her own slight.

She looked at the boy beside her, looked up at him. They sat on the ground. A pine tree rose straight above them. David studied the split roll in his hand, with its long red sausage sticking out at both ends.

"I never know where to begin," he chuckled.

Why could she not at least ask questions? What did they talk of, idle nights? What was Tom's attitude at home toward David? *Tom's place*. Did David feel this?

"First you must even up the roll and the sausage—bite off both ends. Like this."

"That's the rule?"

"The rule. . . ." She was like a woman carrying a great load upon her back afraid to ease it, shift it a bit from the sore spot lest it crush her. She was silent.

David ate methodically. He enjoyed eating. The bite of the mustard was good on his tender tongue. He felt Cornelia beside him eating, not knowing she ate. The "hot dog" was gone: he felt in her silence a need of question which aroused his own.

He wanted to know the truth of this strange problem between Tom and his sister. He wanted to know if Cornelia was really somewhat sentimental, somewhat "the old woman." He wanted to be sure that she was; that Tom was right, loving her, prizing her, putting her in her place. He wanted to be sure that she was not. . . . He did not want to lose a tithe of his respect for her—and for himself, sitting beside her close and wanting no change. . . .

A pause, with the weight of their questions clear and compact—closing them in. He was beside her coming close. She was open. Could they not be open in this silence, whatever came? A tree, warm air, no one. Could they not stay open, whatever was born?

Cornelia stirred with anguish. She was afraid: she was afraid to look at David: for she was very open. He would pour in through her eyes, if her eyes touched him. All he—into her all. Why not? Her answer was a word of escape.

"—that party, tell me about it—" Escape from herself since already, she knew, David was within her. She could not drive him away. She had no will to. She could escape from herself.

"—I am not made for parties. But, oh, Cornelia? There was a man, a wonderful man! He played piano for us. He said—"

Their spirits had met. Upon the tiny separateness of their questions of Tom their spirits had met and tremorously touched. Now, their spirits floated in opposite directions; timidly, still eye to eye, but with contrary wings propelling them away.

They clasped hands.

"Good-by." "Good-by, Davie."

The true psychic reaction of their separateness together came to them both. . . . David wondered if Tom was right. He had a good time with Cornelia. Nothing fecund about it. Being with her led, if to anything, to gaps and to stops invisible, before which always they turned away. "Perhaps she is sterile." "Why doesn't she get married?" Sudden he had a grievance against Cornelia. Life to them must be two separate things. He was happy with her, but even that was a mere emptiness he would with youthful eagerness have sold for a rich battle of pain. She was a woman, yet no woman to him. . . . Cornelia walked away, knowing what David felt. All the way back to her rooms she felt David moving toward Tom, David doubting, David beginning to patronize and to take her in circumstance and reason.

She thought his thoughts. She followed his eyes as they turned away from hers, as they turned away from her. Her own were filled only with what filled his. Seeing with his eyes she saw her enemy. She saw her brother. . . .



## IX

**D**AVID did not understand or question the spirit in which, the following night, he went with Tom to dine at the apartment of Constance Bardale.

She had watched him with large eyes at the table, where he sat mostly silent and very busy with the food that he found delicious. She had manoeuvred him later aside from the chattering group. They talked quietly together. David had no sense of her as yet, beyond the silk cold sheath of an earth-colored dress fending a woman's body.

But he did not suffer. He said to himself: "I don't know really what to say to her. But it goes all right." He was pleased at this, grateful to her. He showed it.

The opposing group broke into laughter. It broke its confines. A tall massive man stood over the two.

"Constance," he said, "you must hear this." A thick, foreign accent marred his otherwise perfect English. He was an Austrian: head of the Stegending Galleries on Fifth Avenue where second-rate examples of second-rate old masters fetched first-rate prices. He stood very close to Constance Bardale, who looked askance at him with sly knowledge lighting the flecks in her gray eyes. She seemed to be saying: "So this is the best excuse you could find for breaking into my tête-à-tête? Don't you see it is hopeless? No, of course, you wouldn't."

The Austrian's sally had its success. It was a breach toward the hostess through which now the others began to flow upon her. The guests shifted near. David remarked how directly Mr. Stegending spoke to Miss Bardale. Unlike him-

self. But he took comfort in his partial isolation. He rested back in it as he would have in his chair had his self-consciousness not made him crane stiffly forward.

"It was Fennido's idea," said Stegending.

"I assure you, Karl, it was Con's." Fennido balanced himself with grace. In a half courtesy he thrust out an indicating palm toward his hostess.

"Mine?"

"Now wait." Richard Fennido rose to his full plump height. David saw how large his buttocks were, like a woman's: his small blue eyes peered from beside the curved nose like a bird's. He was poising evidently for his sort of flight—in words.

"I said it was your idea, Constance, and I can prove it."

A little woman at his side laughed prematurely. Her eyes seemed fixed in a sort of perpetual fright. This was Mrs. May Delano, and her great fear was not to appreciate and not to appear at home. Fennido began.

David found, as he talked, no need of the effort of attention. This Mr. Fennido did not notice him at all. He seemed to hold Constance Bardale with his eyes, the group about him with his shoulders that were curiously sharp above so plump a body. He was done. There was a breaking up. A new shredding of words, a new scramble from which another voice emerged, momentarily mastered attention, sank away.

David watched Tom. Not consciously so much as because he nearly always saw him, when Tom was there to see. He felt a strange thing. Tom, the casual, easy Tom, was uneasy. He was fretted by some sharp discomfort. His eyes wandered, his feet tapped, he lighted a cigarette and threw it away. Fennido talked again. A great talker. Tom gathered the sharp points of his nerves together: he was once more composed but with a tension that had in it the power of some prefatory move: almost a charge. In the ensuing scatter of

minds, Tom was busy gathering them together, gathering them to him. Ill-at-ease no longer. He was speaking. . . .

He spoke for a while, wreathed in the comfortable silence of the others. David's eyes, moved by an impulse he was not conscious of, wandered. They met the eyes of Marcia Duffield. He looked away, shocked by a current which had flowed momentarily between them. David knew Tom's words held him unpleasantly; at times held him not at all. What was the interest in them, what their motive, beyond Tom's wish to speak and to hold interest? David sensed this: sensed the rebuke he felt in this for Tom. As his eyes went back to the eyes of Marcia Duffield it came to him that she was feeling similar things with him. In the brief meeting of their eyes, it was as if they had discovered one another in themselves.

This was absurd and impossible! Marcia Duffield? David's mind could not grasp this flashing intuition; it slipped leaving no conscious mark. He looked harder at the others in the unwitting need not to look again at her. Already, what he could carry with him of that strange momentary kinship across the room was reduced to the sense of bright, black, hard eyes, filled with a wistful question.

He was aware of King Van Ness: perhaps because that solid gentleman was always looking at Marcia. David knew who he was: Junior partner in Van Ness, Stone and Company—son of a great banker, doubtless a millionaire. Van Ness sat as if between two fascinations: the voluble one that was principally Tom, who at times caught him and sent him stiffer forward in his chair; the silent one, Marcia, who never looked at him, but the stirring of whose hands and mouth was at once reflected in his ways—like the image in a dull steel mirror. Van Ness was heavy and tall, not stout. His big bones and the heft of his arms and legs gave the impression of extraordinary weight. Their heaviness proceeded rather



from his mood than their own heaviness. Van Ness was heavy, not because he was great in bulk, but because he was small in spirit. The unlit stretch of him was a sag and a pull downward because he lacked the lift of mental resilience. His head stated this. The forehead was large and bulging. The brown eyes opened wide and were far apart. The nose was long, straight, clumsily rather than strongly molded with unmoving nostrils. Van Ness wore a black mustache, a straight-cropt bristly brush: his mouth was small and unperturbed; his chin jutted forward with a counterfeit of power that was mere lack of curiosity, unresistance to the proprieties and manners birth had brought him. This was King Van Ness: supremely gentlemanly, supremely rich, supremely dull—impregnable. He stirred in the talk of Fennido and Tom as a heavy vessel creaks at anchor in a choppy sea. . . .

David heard Tom again.

"We had it out, until seven o'clock that night. I came home exhausted."

Tom glanced at David. Not long or sure enough to see him turn pale.

"But it can't be! It's a lie!" David said to himself. He remembered the evening Tom referred to. He had come home at six. Tom lay on the couch. In excellent spirits. They had gone to Brown's Chop-House for dinner. And yet—David, as usual, had no positive proof. Perhaps a mere exaggeration, a mistake in the day. Why was he always so eager—so afraid—to catch Tom in a trivial falsehood?

Marcia was speaking to him. Van Ness had roused himself to a rare gust of words. Serious words, half-angry. The question of labor-unions. Marcia drew Tom aside.

David saw how her eyes were close on him and how her breast stirred faintly. He saw that Tom was watching only with his ears: his eyes wandered to the talking banker. In



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a pause, "You must have had your wits about you!" he threw in. He had heard every word.

Van Ness was flattered. Tom threw his head back, looking at the big man in a way that drew a line between them. Van Ness came up, he seated himself beside the pair. Marcia's lips curled as if they had been stung. Van Ness beamed on Tom, as he might have if Tom from great natural kindness had done him a good turn. Marcia was stiff in her chair, looking away. She seemed to be suffering and not to care for the instant if others saw it. Then, her face covered. Why did David sense bravery in that? Marcia thought she could wound either man by being affable to the other but she wanted to wound both. Then it occurred to her that smiling on Van Ness might delight Tom merely. She knew his game. He was done with her. He was putting her away, neatly, satisfactorily—as he did, doubtless, all things. The bitterness was, she could not but fall in with his plans. They were her plans also. None fitted them better than King Van Ness. If only Tom were not thrusting her into his arms! If only she had the madness, the courage to flout Van Ness in order to spite Tom! She believed she might. But if she failed, thereafter, to marry as well? her humiliation would still be before Tom: he would laugh at her, or pity. It was all one. He was capable of saying: "Why didn't you take Van Ness? Don't say I stood in your way!" Marcia knew she must take him, some time. If only she could in the passing send an arrow to the man who, having been her lover, had now the impudence to tell her: "I am your friend, Marcia. I am deeply concerned." Her friend! She had never been able to discover her successor. She sat now, finding in her negative aloofness the one sure way of not satisfying Tom in an attempt to hurt him. He took pleasure so strangely!

David was next to Mrs. May Delano. She straining to take some humble part in the near tête-à-tête of Fennido and

Stegending with Constance Bardale. She discerned David's separation from the group: deduced therefrom his inferiority. She was afraid to give much heed to him. She was a proper, nervous little woman. She had revolted from her world because she was so like her stodgy mother, so much attached to her thrifty and careful father. She had married a mentally inferior Irishman because he owned two theaters on Broadway and was hence in touch with "art." All her life was a pursuit of "interesting" people: in reality a retreat—equally vain—from the middle class whose manners and beliefs rooted in her soul. Her simple Jewish family took up her husband with delight. "I think, dear," he told her in order to give her pleasure, "I think I have more good Jewish friends than any other sort." She was, indeed, miserably married. . . .

David was not averse to her leaving him alone. He felt what this woman was, since he was untutored in the symbols of her pose. He wondered why Mr. Stegending bit his lips.

Fennido was lyric against the baited Stegending's silence. Stegending brooded and tried not to listen to the intimate badinage of Constance and her foil. His eyes rested glowering, stiff on this supple woman; wandered off to some dimmer focus. A strange sorrow pervaded his hard face, the sorrow of an animal rather than of a man. In this state, David almost liked him. He looked less wise, less strong, more full of life when he was full of this strange sorrow. Constance Bardale snatched him back from his withdrawal; with a word fixed his eyes once more on her. It was as if she needed him there in order to go on with Fennido. Stegending's face sharpened, it fell again into its mold of human cunning: it was nearer this woman, farther from what David had cared for in him.

Constance got up; she took May Delano by the hand and placed her glowing in her chair. She turned her back on the

two men who watched her slipping from them as one stares at an impossible offense.

"Well, Mr. Markand, are you coming to see me ever of your own accord, or will I always have to wait till there's a dinner?"

She sat beside him, bringing her chair still closer. She smiled with her full face and her sinuously deflected body.

At once David knew that this which was happening to him was like the other things which he had watched. He was part of this buzzing world. But outside of it, so that he still could understand.

"I think I shall come, Miss Bardale. It is awfully good of you. . . ."

"It is not good of me. I have no one in my place out of kindness. With me, I assure you, charity stops at home."

David flushed at the abrupt nakedness of her compliment. He gathered from the candor of her example the courage to look at her as she had looked at him.

She was not beautiful. Her skin had a strange olive tinge: it was fleckless smooth: it was not transparent. Her hair was heavy, not fine. He noticed her wide short hands. Capable hands. The sense of her flesh, under the quiet silken sheath of her gown had a disquietude and a heat that won him. For the first time he realized how a woman whom he was able to know not beautiful could be desirable. She made a direct call upon his senses. His senses answered.

"You can't possibly like me, yet, Miss Bardale? You do not know me. Why, then, except to be polite——"

She laughed. Her laughter went into words.

His head was left out of it. She was a body. His own body told him. Suddenly her talk and his seemed remote from the main purpose of their nearness as if they stood in opposite corners of the room, tilting at each other with long sticks.

He had to go on tilting. He could not come nearer. However inclined he was—and to his own amazement—to drop his guards.

Her talk, he vaguely knew, made easy his sitting there. In the same distant sense he felt that his defensive parries were not unworthy. But all of this was not very conscious. The part of David given to their talk was swimming along with a free stroke that the heavy touch of his deliberation could only have disturbed. Indeed, a part of him was absent, and was busy elsewhere. Their words rose up like a pelting fire. By its light, David could look beyond, could peer into the spiritual corners of the room, could see their darkness.

There seemed no affection at all: no fellowship. Even for themselves, these persons had no affection. Their egoism was a hard and desperate passion: fruit of some perennial resistance. David could not have reasoned out why this should be: how affection must die in a hot contest: how either it must die or it must share the intensity of the combating forces and turn to passion. The way of these men and women toward themselves had much the way of animals fiercely competing for food and for love. In a less bitter contest they could have played together: like children or like animals that are fed and tamed. Now they were playing at playing. David felt, in this, their wide distinction from animals. A whole array of impulses and thoughts muddled and distressed what might have been the clear flow of natural conflict. They were whipped up into a delirium of broken starts that in the end lacked all direction. Endlessly at work, in the upholstered room, under the gowns of silk and the starched bosoms, a scrimmage of cold desire. Some things each desired of the others: a body, ruin, disappearance, help. . . . David thought his impressions strange. Surely, he was mistaken, seeing nonsense?

No doubt, however, of what Constance Bardale was now

about. He had no idea of her goal: it was plain she was testing him. As surely as if her capable hands had moved over his body, she took his measure.

He knew now what he was doing, with his parries. To defend himself was to accept her gage of battle. He was meeting Constance Bardale in the field she had chosen. This was precisely what he now no longer wanted to do. He became silent. And she who knew a way for his defensive was helpless against his retreat. Against his resistance, she could display her forces, but she was scattered and spent in the emptiness before her. David sat back in his chair, looking beyond, thinking, and gave her nothing.

Constance Bardale got up and left him. "Let him stay alone if that is really what he wants." She thought in the falseness of a moment's pique she had been moved to rescue him from a painful solitude among the chatter of others.

As she sat again, talking elsewhere, she had David in mind.

"What is it?" She recovered herself. "Is he a ninny or was he just bored? I don't think he's a ninny." She had intelligence to know, at least, that he had not been frightened. There had been a calm in his sudden withdrawal which was the contrary of fear.

She took his hand at the door, and now when the invitation she had so unconventionally stressed would have been a mere matter of form, she kept silent.

"Good-night, Mr. Markand."

"Good-night, Miss Bardale."

He was very serious and far away. She had the wit to smile and turn to the others. . . .

It was a crystal night of autumn. David and Tom could not think of taking a car.

David was sorely troubled. He was glad Tom made no effort to talk. A question from him would have thrown

David into panic. It was about Tom he was troubled. And about himself.

"I am afraid. I am afraid to meet a woman flirting with me. I am a coward," he muttered to himself. Constance Bardale had understood him better. She had glimpsed under his sudden tenacity of refusal to meet her, to meet even her eyes or her laughter, some deeper preoccupation which her profane self must not be allowed to enter. But David walked with a sense of discomfort—wide and profound—as if all life were a garment that fitted him ill. Tom was a mere most sensitive spot where the ungainly garment caught.

He had the sad conviction of Tom's dishonesty from the fact that he went so well in that dishonest group: of Tom's equal striving to overcome, to grasp, to possess, he could have no doubt. It was all very ugly to David. That did not matter. It mattered painfully that Tom should be ugly! Tom was his friend whom he loved: whose life he was entering more and more. Who was at fault that these constant doubts flared up against the passage?

Now he wanted to talk to Tom. Tom always took these doubts and talked them away. He wanted Tom to dispose of the night's new accumulation.

Tom walked on. He seemed troubled also. This was a new thought lancing into David. His own misgivings were a shade less clear. Tom was troubled. Perhaps Tom had a grievance against him? If he did——

"What makes you so silent?" he asked, before he knew: reflexedly as one jumps from a danger and then looks to know what it is.

"Do you want to know?" Tom's voice was hard. "I am going to tell you, David. Sometimes you make it anything but easy for me. . . . These were my friends. For my sake, you might have tried to be a little pleasant. . . ."

"Wasn't I pleasant, Tom?"

"Did you stir yourself to be? Oh, of course, I know what's in your mind. 'This is easy for *Tom*. *He* takes to all that frivol naturally.' Well, I assure you, my dear friend, you are mistaken. I do nothing of the sort. But I have a sense of the world and of the need of living in it. That sense at times, fortunately for me, is greater than my sense of my own importance. Your sulks are nothing but conceit. Believe me! If I am distressed, it is because I am anxious. I want you to grow up. I take you to places where you meet mature and interesting people: people with minds. You might do me the honor of trusting my intentions: enough not to sit there as if I had taken you to a dime museum."

"Tom—— I am sorry! I did the best I knew how. . . . Something made me melancholy—yes."

This was all wrong, all wrong, David was thinking. Yet how could he right it? Tom had no real grievance against him. It was *he* who had the grievance! Why did things always take this perverse turn? Why was he always in the wrong? This time he *was not*. . . . Tom spoke on. He too hated the superficial form that social intercourse seemed fatefully to take. But under it the play of minds, the approach of men and women to each other was good: justified the forms and the conversations. He was no creative genius to revolutionize society. When David had succeeded in finding a more satisfactory way for friends to share their thoughts, he would be happy. Until then . . .

"But Tom—why did you, why did you have to make up stories that aren't so?"

It was difficult for David to ask this. All his being and courage were summoned to the effort. Why should he need his courage?

Tom walked quietly on. David felt his vibrance. Either he was in wrath or in pain. "*So that is it?*" Again he was silent.



At last: "David, my friend," in a low still tone, utterly changed from before. "Davie, you make me worry for you. This is not a mere lack of a sense of humor. This is something deeper."

He went on quietly. His words cut into David like curved knives. Silently, David resisted. But the points of attack were too many. Attack whirled about him. . . .

David was always looking for faults in him, doubting his honor and his word. Why? Had he so little faith in his friend? Let David tell him, had he given him cause to believe the first ill thing about him vagrant in his mind? David shifted to answer. Tom was attacking elsewhere. . . . David had no sense of proportion. He seemed to take from his remarks nothing but sources for quarrel. Or was it unwilling rather than unable? David was sure he could here give satisfactory answer. He was perhaps too serious and dull: he took everything Tom said so deep to heart! No cause for anger, really. Tom had veered far. . . . Oh, this was no exception. There were many things. The truth was David thought only of himself: David was selfish.

"Why should you always sit in judgment on me? Supposing I began this trick with you of weighing your deeds and your words to see what direct pleasure they brought to *me*, as a miser might sift dirt to find the grains of gold? Do you really think I *couldn't*?"

A list. . . . The other evening, when Tom had had a headache, David had gone around smoking and whistling. Did David recall the time Tom had brought *him* his dinner? And the pique of David because Tom could not join him and Cornelia on some insignificant walk. As if Tom had broken a tryst. How David had his silences for a week, because of things like that. Did David perhaps remember how he had honored Tom's desire to see him on his return from his vacation? honored it by dragging a dull outsider along for dinner.

Let David think of himself wiring so to Tom. Perhaps he thought Tom's silence meant he was not hurt that time when he broke their theater date because he had forgotten it was Lois' birthday. . . .

"But you said you could easily find some one else."

"Yes, David. I am not like you. I was afraid, if I made it hard for you, I might spoil your evening. I put you at ease. The truth is, the tickets went to waste. Yes, both of them. I had set my mind on that evening belonging to us. Do you think I cared most about seeing Annie Russell? I did not choose to go with some one else, on the occasion when I had chosen to go with you. That night, if you want to know, I sat in the Library of the Bar Association and read law. It was not my sense of justice to spoil your evening which you had chosen to spend with your cousin Lois, because you had chosen to spoil mine."

"You know that isn't fair! You know I went to the Deanes, because I had to. Out of a sense of duty."

"You have a sense of duty toward your frivolous cousins; none toward your friend. I admire your distinctions."

"But, Tom, they would all have been insulted!"

"Whether I was insulted had no importance. . . ."

So it went. David was inexorably and forever in the wrong.

"Your cousins, your uncle, your aunt. I am to judge you care more for them than for me. They mean more to you. Doubtless their ideas, also."

He flayed David's smugness: his cowardice: his failure to grow up. David's sentiment was perfunctory: his sensibilities were dull: he had no recognition of what was going on in the minds and hearts of those who should have been dear to him. Loving meant taking. Tom flung him dolorously down to a level with that cousin whose company he had preferred and loyalty to whom, as against Tom, he had

elected. David followed by the side of his tormentor, as by the side of fate. . . .

Near where they lived was a little Square. It lay blue beneath the green haze of the lamplights. It was timid there under the sweep of the City. The buildings and the high flare of movement over the night made it deep like a well. Tom and David paced round it. Their steps were harsh to David as if in dissonance to the Square's sweet reticence. They knew they must have this out ere they passed through the door.

A dull weight was on David. The crystal night was black and through the blackness pain flashed like lightning. All this was within him. About all this was he, numb and unable to feel himself. He knew the dark by the lightning.

It was not the sense of wrong that made him suffer. It was the impediment to that sense. Had he been able to are noble and I am unworthy," it would have been easeful and sweet. He had great longing to do just this. It was the something hindering him that hurt.

Why was it? He had no answer to Tom. One by one, his objections had disappeared as he voiced them—his objections to Tom. Was it perhaps that he was proud and vain—not big enough to avow his faults? Oh, if it was but that! And then, the hateful alternative that blocked his emotions. For was it, perhaps, that he had not really voiced his objections? . . . that all of these words were far from the true misgivings?

David did not know. He knew that at that moment he yearned to be fully convinced, to be convinced that he was fully wrong. He needed to force himself. His mind told him Tom was right. His heart willed Tom be right. Let Tom be sincere and the perfect friend: let him be the lacker! His mind argued, his heart sang for this sweeter way. They forced him through the forms of acquiescence. . . . Some-

thing neither mind nor heart could not, would not submit: waved frantic and helpless against all the world. This, the bleak hurt in David.

The battle was manifestly over.

They stood in the hall of their flat.

Tom was smiling. Tom suffered also. In his smile, as he put forth his hand, was a plea for forgiveness.

In that gesture, Tom spoke his deepest truth. He had been indeed on the defensive. Attacking David, he had fought for himself: fought for his place in the heart of his friend: fought to cover from David and from himself the flinching part of him which shrilled and manoeuvred for attention, plotted for power. With his soul sick in revolt. David's rebuke was the rebuke and call of his own nature. Since David embodied this, Tom needed him, needed him to love him: also, since David embodied this, Tom needed to destroy him.

In the silence of the hall, the true Tom spoke. As if he had said: "I have said nothing. You are my better self, my deeper self. Stay near to me. Forgive me."

David saw his gesture. He understood that it was sincere. He could not read its context. He needed no more than that it was sincere.

A sweet flood suddenly was over him: the certainty for which he had thirsted.

With both hands he took the hand of Tom. He held it close. His eyes were full of tears. It was David who spoke: "Forgive me!"

In the morning, David awoke full of weariness.

Tom bounded bright from his bed.

At breakfast he was loquacious. He teased Mrs. Lario. He had long spells of laughter over his attempts at Italian.

The heavy woman waited on them silently and let his

pleasantries rebound from her like rubber balls. She was devoted to her "wonderful Mr. Rennard."

"Let us get David to speak Italian," he said. "David is altogether too provincial." He threw out the terms he had picked up as if he were pelting David with them. David stirred languidly. He was full of sleep.

"Well, I'm off." Tom jumped up, before David had finished. "Have a case to-day before Justice Bayne. Wish me luck, Davie. The problem is to keep the old fellow awake. Otherwise I've no chance. If he sleeps, I lose."

He stood in the doorway, his eyes flashed, and laughed.

"You ought to see him, Davie, when he falls asleep on the Bench! He gets deeper and lower—in his swivel chair. His legs are always crossed. As he slides down, the upper leg grates in such a way on the other as to lift its trouser gradually up. Down goes Bayne: up goes the trouser. Till the leg is bare, and the garter visible. There is the Scale of Justice for you. Ha-ha!" He was gone.

As he raced to his elevated train, the last evening raced with him. He was going to his Office—to the law—into the world.

"When Marcia marries Van Ness she must make me a wedge into his law business. I must absolutely manage that! Lomney and Rennard, of counsel for Van Ness, Stone and Company. Gad, what a *coup!*"

He had no thought of David. He had no thought of himself, save as the instrument of his own progress. . . .



## X

SO the days and the nights: the weeks and the months. Tom direct toward his several goals; David involute and hesitant, sinking, it seemed to him, forever deeper from mastery of self and from some vague light he yearned for. Each of his revolts from Tom had the same ending: found him contrite and dedicated to his own unworthiness. David did what his friend wanted. Even to the extent that when he was with Cornelia he came away disillusioned. He patronized Cornelia. He evolved a superficial concord with his relatives and their friends that left him free and fitted Tom's measure of the way to handle such useful, lower factors in one's life. He went with Tom's friends when Tom took him along. His work downtown was satisfactory. He was industrious, tactful, busy. He was not happy.

"Perhaps," he said to himself, "perhaps I do not give myself enough to all these things."

He looked at his life and was amazed to find how little he did, even how little he went out, of his own accord.

Yet, his uncle said to him: "My boy, I am delighted with you. Do you know what you have? You have imagination. I am beginning to realize already on my investment of you. Come up, can you, this evening? Aunt Laretta has asked the whole lot of Tibbetts."

He saw Cornelia with fair frequency. She never asked him to come: and yet how happy she was when he was there! She disturbed him not at all. She let him go his way. She came seldom to their flat. But she was getting somber, it seemed to David. Older as well. The glow of her great eyes

had been a virtue in her homeliness. If they faded, she would be ugly. Sometimes David thought that they were fading.

"Don't forget," Tom said, "Cornelia is past thirty."

But aside from these rather bleak activities, David found himself empty. He had no way of making joy and sharpness from his world's encounters.

When he reflected, he was inclined to blame his dullness. "I am stupid!" he thumped himself with. And he reflected more. He decided to change. He did not know in this very decision the kernel of what he sought. Having resolved to change, he was changed already.

Perhaps it was the new year blossoming. It had been an unusually severe winter. All winters in New York are unusually severe, and most summers. New Yorkers have no memory for their chief source of conversation: a fact that serves to keep it green. But now came occasional mild days colored blue like the sky, keyed low like the clouds that dawdled over the City. The great town was no longer an imprisoned foe underneath the air. It went forth and the air and the town joined forces. David walked the streets with his coat flung wide so the breeze could seek him out and thaw those crannies of himself that had been frigid and asleep.

He made several excursions to the country—alone. They proved abortive. He found it painful to reach the drowsy earth with his drowsy mind. And yet the earth's call was clear, now that the buds stood hard on the hard wood. He could not respond. He could not keep from trying to respond. A strain.

There were dinners and theater-parties with Caroline Lord. But one day David found in himself the courage to decide that he detested her. That this strapping, full-blown woman should take the airs of a secluded virgin was ill enough: but that, with all her experience of life, she should display a

virgin's judgments was unbearable. Was Miss Lord perhaps trying to impress him with her endless thrumming on respectability, her hymned pæans to the moral outlook? Why should she care so much for the standards of wealth, who was forever insisting that her family had been penniless but of high social value? Either this woman was ashamed of her own intelligence and enterprise or else she thought David would like to deem her so. David was not sure. Soon he did not care. Her vigorous solicitude for the manners and customs which she assumed were *theirs* had an offensive note. It made David silent and reserved. It left the field to Miss Lord. So that the efficient lady preened herself and spread herself and paying no true attention to her friend had no idea of her effect upon him.

Tom laughed when he told him about her. David found that there was no difficulty in speaking to Tom about Miss Lord.

"But why should you expect something better of her?" Tom asked him.

"Well, she *is* capable——"

"Bosh, my dear man. Look at her straight. The only strength she has, I am convinced, is the strength of Deane and Company—a strength she sucks." Tom had met her once. Since then, he had skillfully avoided all David's efforts to make him join them some night at dinner. "Now tell me frankly can you imagine that lady, with her advertised virginity, her mincing mind and her stiff sense of right and wrong, careering in open battle? Don't you see that she is something only in her position? Her substance comes from the fields whose produce she helps distribute at a profit."

"She seems to be forever bowing to judgments like those of Aunt Lauretta."

"Of course, since she gets her keep from the same place."

David had many evenings alone. He found he liked them.



He had never been included in more than a tithe of the whirling activities of Tom who, now, had added politics to his program. Tom was a member of Tammany Hall.

"The young men are profiting by the folly of the reformers," was the way Tom put it. "They have learnt, Davie dear, as I hope you shall learn also, generally speaking, that you can't win a fight without joining with your enemy. We have done with kid-glove pats at corruption. We are going to clean up the undesirable elements of the Democratic Party by first entering their stronghold. That is why we are going into Tammany."

David had never managed to believe in the monopolized purity of the Republican Party, although his uncle had spent some breath upon him to that purpose. Largely, he was indifferent and neutral. He had a sense of guilt in his organic ignorance about such vital matters. He asked:

"Is your partner, Mr. Lomney, also in Tammany?"

"Lord no!" Tom exclaimed.

And there it was—the incomprehensible that was forever cropping out! Why, in view of what Tom had just assured him about Tammany Hall, this protest of denial regarding Mr. Lomney?

"Lomney is a Democrat," Tom went on. "A Gold-democrat, of course. But he has no party affiliations of a direct sort."

"What other sort are there, Tom?"

"There are the really important sort," Tom smiled. "We are vitally concerned in certain franchise concessions: traction and gas and the like. See?"

"Is that the reason Mr. Lomney must not belong to Tammany Hall?"

"That is the reason, rather, why I should," Tom paused. "We are in where we should be, and out where we should be. Understand?"

Emphatically, David did not. All he could make of this party business was that it was a kind of game. The nation's money-boxes had highly veneered and colored surfaces. The Republican was more polished, the Democratic had more color. If one said, "I believe in the blue and gold design" did one mean, "I get into the coffers by the side that is painted blue and gold?" David had these little speculations and was properly ashamed of them. He knew they were the sure consequence of his being unable to understand.

When he dined alone he was least troubled. There was a Hungarian restaurant he particularly liked because of the delicious thick soups and the beer and the caressing music. He went there often and ate perhaps more than he should, and sat about drinking his beer very soberly and slowly, puffing at the superb English pipe Cornelia had given him for his birthday. It had an amber stem and the one flaw in the delight of smoking was that he needed to be careful not to bite it through.

On this evening, as usual, he was not alone at his table. At this sort of place, where a sumptuous meal cost forty cents, one could expect no more than one's own seat at the board. Mostly, men came and bowed stiffly for permission to sit down and were no sooner seated than they forgot him altogether in their torrents of strange words. Now came a man with his lady. David listened to them through the meal with an interest that might conceivably have flagged had he been able to understand the Magyar tongue. But the complete veil over their words made watching their faces and their gestures, noting the gait of their voices, a sort of game. It sharpened their personalities as these revealed them, and as the community of language must have dulled them. David took delight trying to break up the endless turgid flow into words and sentences. Mostly, he had delight in watching the woman.

She was a bursting healthy creature, not yet thirty but ripe and matronly and at her ease. She wore a pink gauze waist over a covering of creamy silk that lashed about the rondures of her breast as if its task were desperate against the fullness of all that flesh. She was not fat oppressively. Her form was impetuous against the insipid continence of silk and satin. Her cheeks and her lips were almost equally red. They were in perpetual motion with food or with laughter—at times with both. Her hands were short and slight: a wedding ring and two obtrusive diamonds overloaded the fingers. She seemed not to mind the floating gaze of David. She talked with greater lubrication when his warm eyes were on her. David, listening a little as at times to music, had the sense of clover fields astir with bees: cows brooding in heat and the smell of milk like mist upon the air. His pleasure of this buxom woman, whose fine hands showed her sensitive as well, was like his pleasure of warm spring days in his boyhood, when indeed the women had been drawn and dry enough but the fields very like this amiable matron, murmuring strange words across his table.

Most of the men and women he had known bore no kinship even to the soil they labored. This woman seemed a part of earth. It was a new sense for David. He leaned back, sweetly astir with his mood. It was over his loneliness like a miracle, like a sudden bloom of sun and meadow in the dank streets of the City. It glowed just so bright and wondrous, it was just so unreal. . . . He and the strange woman of whom he had no desire became one: there was a flower in this subtle penetration of her health and of his mood. About them the heavy clouds of smoke and the thick waves of words, all the heaving clamor of the room was like the shadow beyond the burn of a candle. And beyond still farther, the sudden laceration of the cars, the pound of the elevated trains, the wreathing weight of the bleak City. . . .

In the heart of it all the single being of David. He took in fragrance of this outlandish woman as a bee sucks honey. He was alone with fertile fields. . . .

He got up, he went to the telephone in the side office of the café, he called Constance Bardale.

"This is David Markand. I want to come to see you to-night."

She seemed to hesitate: then: "Yes. You may come."

He had not seen her at all in two months. He had never called on her alone. He had met her a few times. But always she had that forbidding smile and the sinuous smile he had known first was hidden away. It was as if she pitied him for a certain deep defect. She never sought him out. When they spoke, she had nothing to say. She had not again asked him to call.

Now, all at once, though five minutes before he had not dreamed of it, he was to be with her alone! There was a sharp tremor through him as if he longed to leap but the time was not yet, so that he was impeded: a tremor like that of a race horse at the post.

He found her standing in a little study he had not seen before. The maid shut the door behind him. A clouded room in which two lamps pendant with gray silk shades cast a languid light. Herself within it. They were somehow close, wherever they stood in the thick room. She wore a straight and filmy housegown of lavender caught loosely back over her narrow hips by a golden girdle. The braided cord fell loose and heavy in front. The room was a place where glowed her gowned body. David was conscious how he was placeless within it.

She took away her hand at once, sat down. She left him to find a seat. She had said nothing. He could see her teeth and how she was faintly smiling, and that her teeth were cutting white against the cloud of her skin. Her shoul-

ders were sharp and clear in the faint stuff of her gown. He could have said to himself: "She has *on* that gown. It is not she." Her shoulders were articulate with little movements saying as much. Her arms came full from the folds of her drooping half-sleeves: her arms denied in their luxuriance the terse cut of her shoulders.

She left words to David. She did not help him find them. David took long selecting a place to sit. He took a chair and moved it and moved it again. He had to be in the right place for sitting: for talking, also.

She watched him, with an uncertain pleasure whose suggestion helped him since there was no hint he should hurry.

"It was very impetuous of me, I guess, to want to see you all of a sudden."

"You see how much I mind. . . . Then before to-night you did not want to see me?"

"Did I say that?"

"I think so."

"I did not, somehow, think of coming."

"Is that the same thing?"

David paused. "I think not. I think if I had never wanted to come before I could not so suddenly have wanted to, now."

"The wish burst out to the surface?" She seemed to be calmly annotating him.

"That must be it," David spoke pensively.

"Then, you must answer me two questions. . . . Why didn't you want to know before to-night, that you wanted to come? And what brought you to knowing at this particular time?"

She was leaning back in her chair and smiling; it seemed to David she was leaning forward and with serious face. As if this had been the truth, he reacted. He found himself

withdrawing: slightly chilled at himself as if he had done an extravagant thing.

"Is there no such thing as a mere whim or mood?"

Constance Bardale understood his reversal in a flash. The contest was on: his dull playing to her hands was over. For a moment she had feared he was going to be sentimental. She was afraid of emotional words as a priestess of a desecration at her altar. Here he was, struggling away. Her delight released the energy of movement. A peal of laughter, low like her words; a somewhat mental laughter: flush of roused energy which in a more serious contingency must have turned into flight or pursuit.

She got up and redispersed herself on the couch. Her act was at once, in its motion, an expenditure of force and, in its specific nature, preparation for future outlet. David already found in himself the wish to go and sit beside her.

The fear, lest it be the false thing to do—lest she dislike it, rebuke him, misunderstand. Misunderstand what? David did not know, because he found that he did not care. He sat there now, measuring his wish to sit beside her with what was in her eyes—to find if it fitted.

They chatted. David knew less and less what he was saying, as he grew more engrossed in the problem of his desire. Did he dare go and sit beside her? He found no answer in her. Her look, like what she said, was oblique and opaque. She seemed impenetrable to his seeking mind, but in inverse ratio she seemed vulnerable to his fleeing senses. His mental will to measure the effect of his coming to her faded from inanition: his desire to come was less dependent on intellectual assurance.

He was unconscious of all this. Until, quiet and quick, he was up from his chair in a silence and beside her. Nothing had happened. He was dumb and he was empty, as if this coming close had been a mere beginning after all of what

he was about: as if he were still upon his journey. Nothing had happened. David leaned over to her face that was at profile from him. At once she turned to him. She gave him her lips. Nothing happened. He kissed her. He sat beside her silent. The sense persisting of a way half gone, of a will half done. He felt the sharp power of her body under a frail gown. Nothing had happened at all. So he took her in his arms.

She was looking with half-shut eyes into her self. Her lips were half shut. All of her. He kissed her again. Experimentally: he was trying to find a certain thing. His hands held the warm stillness of her body: against his hard breathing he had hidden softness. He kissed her. Then, he put her away. His heart raced; his blood panted after a sudden hunger and she sat there smiling. Nothing had happened.

He looked to where she was through a swirl of sense. What should he do? What should he say? How was it possible that she should love him so quick? that he had not known before this marvel of loving her?

He took her hand and kissed its open palm. It was cool. His hand ran up the naked flesh of her arm, thirsting, clamoring. Then, he dropped it and stood up.

He turned his back on her. He paced the little room. Once, twice: over and over. He stopped. He looked at her now as if he had never looked at her before. He was a little way from her. An abyss, an eternity of way which magic alone could empower him to pass.

Was he not friends with magic? Something spoke in him:

"You have only to step forward and take her." He could not believe it. He had never touched her. Magic, magic. . . .

She was a little huddled on the couch. A faint flush on her cheek and her brow. Her hands half clasped on her lap. Her sharp shoulders rounded forward. She was magical and helpless. David was strong against her. A pity came to

him that she was so sweet and so resistless beneath his towering brutality. It was the pity that was sweet and was resistless. Feeling aggrieved for her that she sat there prostrate, he felt that he forgave her, that he loved her, and how by this love she must at once be saved. It was needful to go forth and hold her for her own sake. Lest she believe he had sullied her, lest she fear he did not know what this was between them. To herself as to him it was needful that what had come to pass be good.

He no longer saw her. He was full of the wonder of her sweetness and of his pity. He was full of the wonder of that she was a woman and given up to him. He drew all of her against him. . . .

He knew he was walking homeward. The familiar streets whipped past, the world swung like a sea over the horizon and swept backward above his head. He walked because it had been impossible to sit cramped and still in a car. He had to race with his emotions, else something had broken in him. Calmer he said to himself:

"Why go home? You're not sleepy."

He did not know where to go. A garish coldness, the rancid cutting of alcohol across the sidewalk—a saloon. It appealed to him as a challenge to an ebullient giant. He entered. He needed to whet the brilliant splendor of his mood against what was most sordid and drear in all the world. He went up to the bar and ordered a drink and let it stand, unable to bring its desecration to his consecrated lips. He was throbbing gently as if he had run and won a race:—these were remnants of energy to be disposed of.

The place reeled a bit and then closed in on him. Several fellows sagged at his side by the bar. One was talking:

"I guv' him hell. Y'ort to 'a' seen me guv' him hell."

The barkeeper went over the bar with a wet rag and it



gleamed. He looked in the mirror at his thick face above the serried bottles with undisguised affection. He took a comb from his white vest and parted his hair afresh in its oily middle. He loved that face. He leaned back and was lost in love and contemplation. Through a side door, two women loose over a naked table. Their faces were paste, their eyes were red-rimmed above two little glasses of whiskey.

"I love her. I love her. I must love her. Why does she love me? Why do I never understand?" The wonder of the world was as remote from his mind as his thoughts from this naked room with its hard wood and faces, its brittle bottles.

One of the women tried to catch his eye. She was half nodding with drink and disgust. A rotten night. David saw her examining herself in the mirror. Her face was suddenly sweet. She opened her coat. She folded in and downward the starched corners of her waist so that her neck showed and the gap of her bosom. She looked up and smiled at David. She called for more drink and beat her hand in supplement to her call against the table. David left. Her flesh had sounded dead against the shrill-varnished wood.

Tom was propped up with a book, in his black dressing-gown.

"Hello, Davie." He looked up but did not move. "Have you read *Gulliver's Travels* since you were a kid? Take my advice and do! How that man Swift must have loved life to have hated men so!"

David thought this was nonsense. "What is there to hate in a thing we love?"

Tom laughed. "You talk like a god, David. Are you a god? Hate does not enter into love only where there is paradisaal satisfaction. To what mortal is that granted?" He watched David stand pensively, glowing. With a searching smile: "Also hate may not enter where there is complete

delusion." David started. "To have perfection in one's love, one must be a god. To have complete delusion one must be—an ass. Are you a god, Davie?"

"Good night," said David. . . .

The following evening, he was not to be with her. She had so many engagements. But she was going to break one so he could come, only three evenings later.

Through three days David went, repeating to himself that he loved Constance Bardale. Needful it was to his peace that he be persuaded of this. Good it would be for the new hunger of his life—to spread forth, make fresh dwellings for his spirit—if this was true. Yet all that had occurred was sudden and strange. All this woman was remote. This was why he had so fast retreated from Tom on that first night. Tom was very real: in his light, the new fire in himself did not appear. He was sure that he loved: a transfiguration had been made in him: the future of Constance Bardale must in some inscrutable way be one with his. Yet he could not talk of this joyous revelation to his best friend. Indeed, with his best friend all of it was dim. He did not solve the strangeness of this. He said to himself: "It is all too mysterious yet to be spoken of. Tom would not believe me. He would ask me what had happened to make me know." Had David these three days seen Cornelia, he could have spoken. He did not know this since he had no plan to see Cornelia. He remained with his secret. Wondering, trying to wonder about it, his thoughts reeled in a dance with his upstarting senses. He could not even clearly wonder about it all.

The conviction was there, however: he was bound by a sacred tie to Constance Bardale. He made great what was between this woman and himself because he needed it great. Also he made it great because he needed thereby to justify it to himself. Was it not plain how great all this must be

to Constance Bardale? He knew so little of her ways that he had no sense even of ignorance about her. She was a lady. She was one fortunate in every circumstance: handsome, intelligent, rich: not one to alloy or to misprize her value. This lovely lady had given herself to *him*. A madness must have moved her. That madness love. Or perhaps something still more sacred: belief in his love, the desire in her heart that it should be requited. She had miraculously cared for him. But even this explained little—explained not at all her sudden discard of those womanly reserves that must be her nature, the swiftness of her bestowal. This could be explained alone by his own love's plea upon her. She had felt and answered his love, before he was aware of it. She had done as women always by some mystery: given blindly where she was needed, not asked, not judged,—responded in faith and a sweet helplessness to the cry of man.

And all his life—whatever she wanted of his life—he owed to repay her.

Feeling his mighty debt to Constance Bardale, David thought of his mother; and of his mother with his father that last dim year he had lived, and of his questionings on birth and death and love. What he had seen and been taught then, the facts of his life had not disturbed since they were simply heaped upon it. His mother had great pleasure of her son. When he was near to her, her face brightened. When he came running and asked: "Take me with you, Mummy, to the village," she would drop her basket and fold him in her arms and say: "Put on your leggins, Boy, and you may come." It made her happy. Unendingly to give to him was, in her heart, unendingly to receive. So David learned of women: that they are mothers and that they hunger after their children and have great joy of them. His mother loved his father, but she had no joy of him at all. She took care of him, gave to him, also, without stint. But she seemed to

receive nothing of her bestowal. She never kissed him, as she did David. When he came into the room, though she was swift to respond to his desires, it was with heavy face and heavy feet. There was more: his father made hidden demands on other women, took something from them, took what the child had once heard called "liberties" with them. For this, his mother suffered and pitied the women. It was "the poor girl!" "How could you, how could you, Adolph!" "What is going to become of Emma!" So David learned of women: that they are the hunted of men and have no joy, of them but only sorrow and humiliation. And David learned of men: that they can, in some miraculous way, make women sacrifice themselves, and love them, although this love is a burden and a blight.

There had been Anne. She did not disturb what he had learned of women. The self-bestowal of woman was a part, a great part, of the goodness of God. Woman had no need save for children: no joy save in the bitterness of serving. Anne was there like a sweet delirious dream in the fevered night. She had lain beside him and mothered his distress; she had given him of her strength to be strong in the morning. When she judged he had had enough of her, very calmly, very like a mother weaning her child, she had put him aside. All of it a sort of passionate nursing: the sort that the passionate nights with their drain of fire demanded. Anne had always been silent.

His heart's way of woman remained. In a veiled moment, she came and offered up her sweetness to the yearning of man. A mystery—a mystery that now had come to him! In the flesh. In the lovely flesh of Constance!

She received him in the same small room.

David was momentarily chilled by her precise difference from the image of his three days' thoughts. She came up to him and let her arms glide softly over his and warmed him.

He looked down at her. He saw how the loose folds of her *cérise* robe parted and fell from her uplifted elbows: how, underneath, her bosom was held tight in a white band of lace. He thought that he might take that lace away and truly see this bosom, crush it with his mouth. He could scarcely see at all.

He checked himself. This was unworthy of him: unfair to her. He began to talk. But she smiled and came close to him again: she stopped his words with her body. Her eyes fixed on his with a plea that he need not talk. He tried to tell of his love, of his devotion, of his thanks, and she was stiff, impregnable to words. He kissed her, had her body in his hands, and there she was pliant, singing with response. So, soon she lay there under his eyes and he had forgotten to say the things his duty ordered. . . .

At last he made a mighty effort.

He sat beside her on the couch. She was cool and straight beside him. She was like a beach that the tide had left and that the sun had hardened. Golden-smooth. Her breasts lay firm, her thighs rounded and fell like lovely scoopings of summer waves. She was there like a strand of the earth, waiting for the tide to return upon her.

David managed to speak.

"Constance dear," he began. She laid her hand on his and he clasped it. She seemed suddenly afraid. "Constance, I feel that I have so much that I want to tell you. . . . Constance, it is only this that I love you with all my heart and soul: that always——" He stopped. There she was stopping him again. She had withdrawn her hand.

"Don't, David! Don't!" Her hand on his mouth.

He felt ashamed, ashamed of their nakedness together.

"You mustn't use that word *Love* so lightly, David."

He was all pale inside. He felt that his breast had sud-

denly caved in and that his heart beat hurtfully against its broken walls.

"I do love you, Constance."

"No you don't. Don't be silly, David."

"Why? Don't you love me?"

It was strange how little he protested. He felt this. Already he believed her. But if he did, what was all this between them? What infamy?

She seemed to read his consternation. She lifted herself and kissed his eyes and his hot dry lips.

"You don't love me. And I don't love you. But we are very fond of each other."

He was deeply ashamed. He wanted to move away: to cover himself. He did not know how. He did not dare in any way to move. He sat there, fixed in contemplation of the havoc these few words had made of all the structure of his thoughts: regarding the wreckage with dim eyes, but amazed most that the wreckage did not move him more, leave him more empty: that life—and this—should still be possible.

"Aren't you going to kiss me?"

"Constance!" It was a cry of help for his dreams.

"You are a darling. I shan't risk losing you by not having you know me and yourself as we really are. . . . Why, David dear? Aren't you even fond of me?" She had her arm about him. "Kiss me, then. There." She was half laughing. She was a bewilderment of delight upon him. She was half laughing at him.

Like a mirage, split by a stroke of the sun, his picture of their love faded away. He had not defended it. It was no more. Yet he was not empty. He was less serious, less loaded than before. It had been a mirage of paradise in a desert. It was gone. But the desert through which to trudge to reach it was gone also. Here was green earth.

He held her differently already. She seemed no less happy.

He was more aware of herself, more intent on giving her pleasure. He thought less of his own heart and its desires. He found his own joy, now, in bringing joy to her. It was all marvelous strange, he knew vaguely in the back of his head. He had abdicated loving her, she had declared that she did not love him. Yet he was content, he was happy. He had been wrapt in the solemnity of his emotions like a priest at prayer. Now, he was all out of himself like a boy lost in his play. And yet he seemed stronger, more contained, fuller of life. He knew sometime he should have to think all this out. . . .

She took his hand and led him to a glass in which he saw their faces together. Hers was laughing quietly. His was neither serious nor mirthful: full of a sweet surprise.

"Look at yourself," she said.

He remembered once when he had been a boy at School and he had wrestled long and hopelessly over a problem in mathematics. His teacher, of whom he was very fond, came and leaned over him so that her waist touched his shoulder. She made a quick calculation on his paper. The problem was solved.

"There now. Wasn't that easy? All that fret and trouble——"

He had felt a relieved gayety go through him: half the help, half the nearness of the teacher. He was reminded now.

"Look at yourself," she said. He looked. He saw his face like that of a rather unknowing boy upon whom a good-hearted friend had played a delicious joke. He was aware of the face of Constance: it was just beneath and beside his own. And it was laughing under the passion of her hair. He saw that he was laughing also. . . .

He was glad this time to find Tom at home.

"My! My!" Tom bantered from his wonted corner.

"You are getting gayer all the time. What larks are you up to, anyway?"

"I have been to see—Miss Bardale."

A steely glance went through David.

"Oh—she." Tom spoke. And David knew that never, never could he speak of such things to his nearest friend. But he could speak of some things.

David came up to him. "Listen, Tom. Am I ever going to grow up?"

"I hope not, Davie—altogether."

David sat down beside him. Tom went on: "I rushed home after a business date for dinner. Hoping to find you. I wanted to see you to-night."

"Why?"

"For no literal reason, David. . . . Does one have to have a literal reason for seeing one's friends? Eh? Does one?"

Suddenly, David was uncomfortable. He had felt strong entering the room. He had asked Tom if ever he was going to grow up because just then, perhaps more than at any other time, he felt mature. Now this fine mood faded. It was very strange. He could not adjust to Tom the discoveries of life he made without him. Three evenings before he had come home dancing with romance and Tom had cut his clouds. Now here he was, realistic like a god taking his mortal holiday: and Tom spoke of having missed him and of the love of friends. What was wrong here? Why could he not get rid of the ridiculous idea that Tom was always spoiling his pleasures?

"You don't care for me very much," there he was saying, "You don't even come home anxious to see me."

"I did to-night, Tom."

"Yes: after an evening with our fair Constance. I am restless, eh?"

David blushed. How unpleasant Tom could be! But he



was sorry he had blushed. For Tom looked sharp at him: his face seemed to be coming forward as he looked. Then, he dropped back into his chair and took up his book. With his eyes on it, he spoke casually:

"Since you are so friendly with Constance, perhaps you can tell me: has she gotten rid of Stegending? Or is he still agonizing?"

David turned pale. "How should I know?" he muttered.

Tom smiled at once, knowing he had hurt him.

"It is always a mere matter of time till they want to marry her. Then," he chuckled, "it is—as the doctors say—a mere matter of hours."

David felt the need of striking, as if it had been striking back. Although he had no accurate sense that Tom had attacked him.

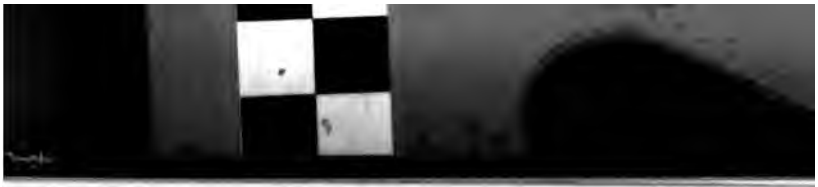
"You are funny, Tom. You say I never come back anxious to see you: and you seem to find fault that I've been out amusing myself for a change. As if you weren't out ten times more than I."

"I go out for business. If I had my way I'd stay home every blessed night. And tell the hostesses to go to blazes."

"Well, I like to go out for pleasure."

"By all means, Davie. But don't have too much. You may get tired of it. Then what will you do?" He laughed. "Perhaps then you'd have more time for your middle-aged friend."

His mood was changed. The will to hurt was gone. It was as if in its fulfillment he had been assuaged. Tom looked at David now with a warm candor. And David, looking at Tom, realized that this was a great joy—this talking with his friend: it was clear and deep and right: and what had come before was already dim, had already lost its taste. Even as he looked back for it, that seemed less real than this.



Something of the essence of these thoughts Tom found and was glad.

"Come, old man," he said. "Light your pipe: let's have a chat."

In a way so gradual and smooth he had no heed, life was going well with David. He was relaxed before all its elements that met him. His mind, instead of sallying out to measure and contest each meeting with reality and to reduce it in vassalage of his own subjective world, receded now within itself and what it found disguised, remolded into consonance with the world meeting him.

His easy acquiescence in Constance Bardale's sense of their relation brought him reward which his new mood could value. The delusion of love was rent away. Remained the reality of passion to be accepted or denied. He was in no mood for denial. Tacitly he let slip all he had dreamed of woman, all he had dreamed of love. He had no thought of a next-coming step with Constance. He was not open to surprise or worry. He was calm, contained. He was the very lover she desired.

And proud of his success. Proud of his conquest of one whom a naif part of him still found miraculous and remote. At her parties now he fell back into a silence and reserve of a different meaning. He knew himself the secret master. The homage of her guests to Constance was homage to him. Men feeling for her with tense nerves, warm eyes; women seeking her secret in her words and gestures, envying her power, glad to share in its largess and pick up the aroused senses of the men that she sent retreating from her—was incense to David. He could afford to recline away from the conversation: he could dare outstay the last of the guests and hold her one moment in his arms, drink in one draught the wine of the evening's excitement upon her lips before he left her also.

He did not see her too often. She saw to that. She had a tact and a control that were artistry. And a consciousness of this that made her jealous of her standards, steeled her against lowering them, filled her with a firm discipline of pleasure. She designed the mingling of their lives with restraint and omission, with emphasis and grace of color. David breathed the well-being that must rise from any poise of forces. He had the comfort of the part in an harmonious whole.

Now this well-being wreathed forth into the other, the deeper phases of his world.

He moved toward a different attitude in his work downtown. Here the violent yet canny preachments of Tom helped also.

"The weak man," Tom said, "stays in business and yet despises it. So that the one End of business—success—escapes him. Of course I am not now talking of the mediocre fool who respects business—as he is told to—and ekes out his pittance blacking the other fellow's boots. You are beyond that, Davie. But there is another sort of fool—a more intelligent sort: the man who 'sees through' business, despises it and therefore muffs it. He is unreasonable also. If he can't stand business, let him clear out! If he decides to stay in he is a fool not to win. One must of course despise business. One must know that it is the scramble of rather lowly-evolved and very greedy persons. One should be conscious of the gullibility and venality of bankers, of the wastefulness of manufacturers, of the opaqueness of middlemen. It should be clear to you that the elements that lift up the Rockefellers and the Morgans and the Hills are chiefly the singlemindedness of the stupid, the unimaginative and the dishonest. But what sort of a fool is it, David, who being aware of these inferior forces permits himself to be worsted by them? That seems to me an altogether illogical conclusion. It seems to

me that just this knowledge should make the knower come out on top. In other words, the man who has brains enough to despise business should be the successful business man: not himself but the mediocrities should become the victims of his disgust. Therefore, David, through the very clarity of your vision into the nature of affairs, you must master them. God, man! would you be anywhere save *on top* of such a muck-heap?"

Tom had not failed to help make David's vision clear. As he said:

"Law is pandar to all of business's ugly lusts. I ought to know the system's filthiness if any one."

David took these tirades with a grain of salt. He was convinced of the Quixotic extravagance in Tom's idealism. Yet, the essence of his teaching must be right. David believed he knew this, now. Business was indeed a scramble in life's gutters for food: the unfortunate way men had of getting their bread. But what was one to do? There was the bread in the muddy gutter. Plenty of it, plenty to go round. Tom had assured him that the economists who said "No" were slaves of the scramblers. Let him just read Kropotkin. Production was in a state of wasteful anarchy. But men had somehow preferred to ship their fair food from the fields where it grew, and drop it in the filth of a million scurrying feet, in the gutters that were rutted and befouled by years of greedy commotion. Here they preferred to fight for it like pigs nosing to a trough: to expend their energies and debase their spirits for its hoarding and for the depriving of others. It must all have been in some way deeply needful, else why should this idiotic condition have arisen, why should the simpler way not have been found, by which all men might have what they needed to eat—expend the rest of their forces in higher works? This was the rule. David must scramble along.

"The one danger," said Tom, "is not to understand. The one degradation is to exalt this pothor, to make a noble thing out of the job of earning one's living. The cult of Business. You see it everywhere. Men must worship: it is easier to worship low than high."

All this was sound enough, thought David.

On his way down Wall Street, to and from his office, he saw a spectacle strangely near the gutter metaphor of Tom. David remembered how this sight had at first aroused him: how quickly it had become an unnoticed feature of that downtown world so that, if he had missed it, in rain or in snow, he should have known that a great dislocation had come upon the Temple.

It was the sight of the curb-brokers. There they stood crowding the broad street with their bodies, clamoring the air with their cries and their scurried gestures. David went close to watch them: for they were a thick knot on the street, they were like a swarm of bugs overrunning a lump of refuse in a road. To distinguish more than the blotch of their thronging and the low drone of their noise from which sharp voices pierced, one had to bring near one's face. David saw, now, that they were mostly young men, rather shabbily dressed since they must be prepared for every weather and for any scrimmage, with sharp faces—very red or very pale—in constant motion. Their eyes darted, their mouths worked, they dashed notes in little books, thrust forth hands above the gesticulating mass and spun away to other knots of the buffet with hats over ears and upturned collars. They looked up at the high windows. There, perched half outwards in rows were other men, behind ranks of telephones that they perpetually shrilled in, and thrust from them. They leaned out, with contorted fingers signaled to their colleagues below. Hands jutted from the crowd, fingers twirled answering signals. They used the language of the deaf and

dumb. If David had not heard the incessant burr of their voices above the shuffle of their feet, he might have taken them for deaf-mutes. A same something strained and unquickenened about the muscles of their throats and jaws which he had noticed in deaf-mutes. He understood that only by signs and battle-calls could they in the street and the men perched in the windows carry on their communications. He admired their adroitness. The disturbance rose and fell: had its hours of thick frenzy and its streaks of deliquescence. But it was unending.

David had learned that the curb-brokers dealt in securities not listed in the new Exchange that stood like a Temple beyond the turmoil of the street. No other difference. So he knew these solemn walls were hypocrites. Within them, older men, better clad, better-paunched, buffeted and bid and bounced: at times—he was told—floored each other, blackened eyes, broke noses. All one: the naked and the canopied gutter: the scrimmage under sky and the scrimmage under marble. Buildings tiered and teemed, and in each cranny a fight. With polite tricks, men plotted and plundered, swung the whole of their vast might of concentrated work into the anarchy of Distribution. To the end of deflecting from its even channels the sap of Toil to their own bellies. Scrambling masters and myriad slaves who had not even the grace of scrambling for themselves.

David saw how he was in a Jungle. A high and splendid Jungle whose call to the hunt the minds of men had made complex and beautiful, but had by no jot lessened. On the high seas and in far countries they wrangled with fire and steel: in the curbs of the City they wrangled with their bodies: elsewhere they wrangled with sinuous thrusts of their brains, deceit of their mouths. But everywhere they were at a single, sterile Game. David had been willing to accept Tom's symbol for it all: that black swarm of men,

blotching the canyoned street—the brokers at the Curb. He knew it for what it was.

Now, David was beginning to see by a new light, to find different colors. Immersed in the struggle himself, he found that it had its appeal like any contest: its occasions for fun and romance, its release of the generous and the brave from the welter of uglier instincts. The strange thing about Tom was that he kept the attitude of the outsider. Perhaps therein lay his strength, the element of caution and command above the Battle. But if David knew from his boyhood what a terrible thing it was to watch two men beat each other in the street, he knew as well what a thrilling thing it was if he were one of the beaters—beyond pain and reason altogether, given up to the ecstasy of *beating*. So now, however arbitrary the rules, wasteful the blows and trivial the ends, there was a pleasure in this clinch of wits, a catching curve to this conflict. The glamor might come, as Tom insisted, from the prodigious expense of will and energy in those who struggled together. But glamor it was. . . . Was all glory on earth the glory merely of him who could see glory?

David moved to his new poise in the world on wings within him like the wings of a seed. He was part of that Spring, he would bud with it: he too sought sustenance for his green shoots, his frail flowers. His affair with Constance shed mellowness like a sun: his relation with Tom inspired at once a taste for mastery and the need of seeking it elsewhere since to Tom he was subject. In the particular detail of finding his life downtown an exciting game, there was his new Chief, the credit man, Mr. Christopher Barlow.

A little gray-haired man with blue eyes sparkling: a silent man who seemed unconcerned with giving him the most perfunctory explanations of the work he expected him to do.

"How the devil can I give satisfaction if Mr. Barlow declines to show me how?" said David to himself: and looked

at Mr. Barlow: and found he was not near so ill-at-ease as the occasion called for.

Mr. Barlow did not ignore him. His eyes dwelt on David, reticent, timidly, as if he feared to intrude even with his eyes. But it was no professional attention. The embargo was strict on business. David had his desk. What should he do with it? He pondered—pondered long since there was nothing swift in David at all. He resolved to take matters into his own hands.

"I am here," he decided, "I have to do something here. I'll look about. . . ."

He began to eye, finally to study files, to go through ponderous credit lists, to decipher, by the process of comparison, the marks he found against the names of customers. He read the classified papers on Mr. Barlow's desk: those on the wicker trays, before the stenographer filed them. Mr. Barlow saw him prowling. David was quite sure the sharp, kind face lighted up and the eyes twinkled. Mr. Barlow blew a sluggish ring of smoke from his cigar into the air, thrust through it with his pencil and exclaimed: "I got you!" to the ring. Cryptically enough. Yet it was such behavior that limited David's discomfort. Mr. Barlow seemed quite manifestly pleased. He would go on prowling.

This continued for several weeks.

His uncle burst into their office with rustle of spread papers flying about him like sails. He made for Mr. Barlow's desk without noticing David.

"Oh, Mr. Barlow: I wonder can you help me in this matter of Dehn and Penny. You know, they have sued for that fall shipment. Yes, of course: the shipper is responsible. But it's a complex case. Whereabouts do we stand as to the next ten years, should we decide to compromise?"

Mr. Barlow made a coördinated reach for papers that were carefully set away in different drawers; at the same time he



rang for his secretary. As he took a pad and began annotating: "File C-9, Dehn and Penny, Miss Loman," he said and was at work. Mr. Deane was doubtless aware of the dispatch of his Mr. Barlow. He did not seat himself. He stood there, patiently waiting. He hummed a tune and beat time to it with the tip of pencil on Mr. Barlow's desk. With a cloudy gaze he took in the cluttered room and David in the corner: then suddenly was lost in contemplation of the ceiling.

"Here you are, Mr. Deane." His uncle was startled as if from a reverie. It was an effort to take his gaze from the fly-specked ceiling down to the pad of paper with its squad of figures.

"Hm—yes—Hm," said Mr. Deane as he studied the array.

Mr. Barlow gave him sufficient time to study the report. Then, "There are two human elements besides," he said, "Faraday is an erratic salesman. He may possibly lose us the account." Mr. Deane nodded thoughtfully. "And on the credit page," continued Mr. Barlow, "their new treasurer, Clumberg, is a man of intelligent imagination. His investment in Dehn and Penny means confidence, and his presence there means improvement. He is the sort of man who may be guided toward us by this very matter."

Mr. Barlow was silent. Mr. Deane stood a moment rigid in speculation. Then he relaxed. He had found his decision.

"Very good. Very good. Thank you, Mr. Barlow. It is a good risk." He turned to go.

He paused at the door. His face was relieved of his stern cloud. In the wreathing of his mood, his eyes wreathed also and took in David: this time, not as a part of the office's equipment, but as a young man in whom he had an interest.

"By the way, Mr. Barlow," he had David in his eye, "how goes our young rascal? Is he behaving himself?"

"He is making progress."



## THE DARK MOTHER

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Mr. Deane chuckled a bit with his big stomach and disappeared.

David was bewildered. He had not been sure that Mr. Barlow had noticed him at all, much less, observed if he was making progress. He thought the best way to hide his rather uncomfortable pleasure was by burying it in a litter of accounts where personal data concerning tobacco dealers—their wives and their habits—mingled fantastically with cold figures. But of one thing David was already sure. He was groping confidently in a labyrinth of business detail to whose end he had been offered no key and no direction: he was assistant to a man that ordered him and asked him nothing whatsoever. Yet he liked that man immensely. And he observed to his surprise that he was working harder than he had ever worked. He was soon to know that also he was learning faster. There was in the queer antics of Mr. Barlow a design. In a tacit way, he had been set to a test. In a hidden way he was being watched! Business was a brighter thing. He came each morning to his work with his nerves tingling. He was eager to plunge in and pull out more prizes of knowledge. Since the standard of Mr. Barlow was so dim, David put it high and worked the harder to attain it: put it at the height of himself.

Then, the business of his office dawned on him as a mystery no longer. He seemed to know where he was and whither he was going. The mists were lifting, there was a pleasant terrain under his feet. Mr. Barlow said no word. But David felt like swinging his arms.

Evidently even this secret impulse was no secret to Mr. Barlow.

"Mr. Markand."

David startled. As he got up from his little desk, he felt as if he were at the beginning of a race he had long prepared for.

Mr. Barlow handed him a batch of papers; "Make a report on this,"—and resumed his silence.

David went back to his corner, his hands a-tremble as if he held at once a testimonial of merit and a maze of magic words he must by some fantastic grace decipher. Would he prove equal to the test? He looked at what was in his hands. With difficulty, he focussed his eyes and read. He seemed to know! Very slowly, step by step, he followed. All the papers he had surveyed, all the correspondence left—by accident, he wondered?—on Mr. Barlow's desk swung now into line like an army of reserves to help him. He met his battle, he was half dazed by his ability to advance against these intricate problems. He gained confidence as he moved. After an hour's work:

"Mr. Barlow," he said, as if he had said the same thing a score of times before, "I shall have to make a couple of visits for this report. I must go to the stores—and——"

He dangled.

"Well, then—why don't you start?"

In the relief he had of the answer, David knew the depth of hesitance that there had been in his announcement.

He went and succeeded. He was a little amused to find in himself that he liked every one he met in his visits, and that despite this fact his report was unfavorable. Mr. Barlow made no comment at all.

"It must have been an easy one," said David to himself.

But he realized that he had had a bully time: he was winning his spurs.

Occasionally now, Mr. Barlow broke his silence: in the unobtrusive way with which he kept it. David was bewildered at his chief's understanding of him. He had an uncanny way of choosing subjects for chance observation that came close home.

"Could you find anything more human," he once asked,

"than this job of ours? Yet it deals with the cold matter of financial credits. The point is, Mr. Markand, there is no such animal as the 'cold matter of financial credits.' There's human warmth, human smartness, human weakness everywhere. You can just bet there's never another thing. You know it in a play of Shakespeare, don't you? Get to know it in this play and you'll have fun."

Mr. Barlow indeed seemed to have fun.

"Well," he greeted David, "ready this morning to sail the Spanish Main? Let's see,—hm," he was slicing his mail from one hand to another as one does with a pack of cards, "let's see what's on deck to-day."

It was hard to guess how old was Mr. Barlow. His short-cropped hair was uniformly graying: it had been black, it was now neither black nor gray. He was clean-shaven. David noticed two wide, deep folds pleating the cheeks of his generous long face. But the air of Mr. Barlow was young. David did observe a certain resoluteness in his good humor—a consistency perhaps too nurtured. At times, when his eyes wandered from his work and he sat there rigid, slowly beating his hand from the supported wrist upon the table as if to some inner rhythm, David saw a gathering sadness in his eyes. Before it could spread to the rest of his face Mr. Barlow routed it. He got up, he walked up and down, his little body had the lithe quickness of morning. He shrugged his sharp shoulders quite as he did when he smiled. The sadness was gone. . . .

It could not be long before this new bloom of contentment reached where Tom and David stood looking at each other.

It was come and working over him as does all bloom: subtly, hidden away in the slow hours, swift alone in the achievement and perhaps in the passing—a thrust here of

green, a burst there of bud, the alternate warm cradling of sun and shadow. . . .

He was alone in his room. By breaking early from his work he overtook the long rays of the sun of afternoon pointing across his window into the East where the night rose. He squatted on the floor with crossed legs, arms folded. He stayed unmoved, and let his thoughts swirl about his gladness like birds circling a light-house.

Swift shadows were his thoughts against the tower of his vision. David saw he was alive, and felt it good. Surely life was a miracle none could explain. Surely to approach the miracle was to confess it—bask in the glow of knowing life unknowable. He had a vision of the world of men and children and mothers—endless millions massing down the ages. All of them had eyes upturned, had eyes and lips full of prayer. All of them were on their knees. All the men and mothers and children of all ages were praying before the miracle of life! He thought of Science—he thought of Darwin, of the makers of systems and machines, of the weavers of dogmas and rules. He knew that all these were parts of the miracle and somehow good. But what did they know and what did their saying amount to? Could one of them explain what and why *Life was?* the ecstasy of this teeming, whirling earth flung like a fleck of dust upon the whirlwind of countless worlds that, in their turn, lifted a shred of flimsy scarf on the tempest of unending Space? They could not explain. Their absorption in some speck of knowledge ended alone in this: that they forgot they could not explain . . . so lost the one approach they might have had to the ecstasy of life. Their little speck of knowledge blotted their vision!

David sat thrilling with the thought of this adventure—this greatest of surprises:—he was alive! He seemed large in his vision, strong. He realized that Tom did not have this vision. He felt himself larger and stronger than Tom.

He felt tender toward him for this. He forgave him everything, since everything was trivial to this: that he was stronger than Tom and loved him, and must therefore care for him. Out of the dim vision of all life, there crystalized for David a vision clear and single of his relationship with Tom. But in its superb folly, never could it have been engendered save for the truth of David's wanderings among the stars. . . .

So he was really stronger than his friend? And he had been unjust with misunderstanding? There were discrepancies of words and action, dubious things in Tom? Then let him out of his overflowing strength observe them.

Tom said to him: "You are my one real friend. You must believe that."

And: "Whatever I may say or do with others to deflect me, to you I am the truth."

Tom said these things often, because often puzzlement was in David and doubt near. Tom said to him: "Your standard of me, David, is a great injustice. Its height is unfair. I am not strong, David, I am weak. I admit all the hateful things you see in me when we go out together. A sort of drunkenness quivers through me. I have to say clever things, I have to please, I have to *control*. Damn it, man! you don't despise it half so well as I. But, Davie, I am not like that, am I, when we are alone? Why won't you judge me by my real self? Tell me, do you judge anything else when it is hidden and sick?"

Tom said to him: "You didn't like the way I was to-day with Durthal? Oh, my dear fellow, it was plain enough. It was written all over you. My only wonder was what poor old Lars was thinking. What a dear, black grouch you can be, Davie. . . . Well, why should I not be cordial to Lars? Why should I not pay as much attention to him as I wish? And more than I do to my best friend—yes, my best friend whom I ignored? I know that, Davie. In company I do

not need to pay attention to you. You are not part of company. If I ignored you—logical, eh? I have *you* alone. And if, in yourself, you do not know the difference in the way I feel toward yourself and toward silly, empty-headed Durthal, do not expect me to make it clear with a room full of fellows. Because I won't!"

"Do you think Durthal empty-headed?"

"You know he has just enough stupidity to make an intelligent professor of Swedish drill."

"And Darby Lunn?"

"Lunn has talent, David. Whether he will ever amount to a thing as a painter is another thing. I doubt it. He is a bit mad, you know. Nurtures all the nonsense of his will with a great pride instead of trampling it under, as a true artist should. What I am trying to help him toward is knowledge of the folly of extravagance and wildness in so sober a calling as Art."

"But *you* are wild with him, Tom! You talk nonsense and you act nonsense as I have never seen you do with any one else!"

"If I didn't meet him on his own ground, what chance would I have of drawing him off it? . . . Really, Davie, you are a joke."

"Are you very fond of him also?"

"Not also—and not either. I am interested in Darby's hopeless talent: and in Durthal's efficient helplessness."

"They both believe, I am sure, that you're devoted to them."

"Well: they are devoted to me. Why should I not let them think what gives them pleasure? Do I harm them—does what I let them think harm you?" . . . David often wondered if each believed himself Tom's "only friend."

But now he knew these doubts unworthy. He had a strength with which to exorcize them. He knew that *he* was

the real friend. He knew that Tom was not altogether conscious of his motives with such "friends" as Lunn and Durthal. The truth was, he loved power: loved the nearness of those over whose minds he was ascendant. Unconsciously, he fed to each a subjecting mental and emotional food. This was but one of the details of Tom's curious character; David now understood.

The truth was, indeed, that Tom could be insincere: deeply so, never. His insincerity was superficial. It could come into play the world over: it went like a mist before the sun of their friendship. David must learn a difficult thing: to believe his friend when he spoke truth, to be unshaken when he scattered counterfeits. Was not the reason plain enough? Tom was sensitive beyond measure. As no one else he felt the scorn of life, the scorn of human imperfection. Among the false works of man he had to move about, to hunt and earn his living. Tom's passionate disgust for the Law! How his too fine sensibilities were agonized by the Law's lying ugliness: so that his native pleasure in its practice went and he had no eyes for the Law's better side. Or, if he did have pleasure in the game—and he must while he played it—how quick it died away before the soreness of his nerves! Tom could not admit of the need of life's imperfections: not face the imperfections in himself. Yes: that was it. When these imperfections called for their hour of air, they simply cast the real Tom out where he would not interfere. That was why the love of power and applause, when it did come to Tom, came like intoxication, overwhelmed him so that David looked in vain for his scornful and uncompromising friend. Now David would look in vain no longer. In the very perfection of Tom's worldliness, he saw the measure of his contempt. As if Tom said: Here, my fools, you want me to dazzle you and play you? You shall have your fill. You have no interest in my real thoughts, my real self? You shall have no peep at



them. The more, now, Tom hid himself, the more David found him.

All this David discovered for himself. All this, in many conversations, hinted or thrust sharply in, Tom had been preparing him to think. Tom—and an April sun upon the seed of himself. . . .

David glowed. . . . What marvel what difference there could be in the same things! His cable-car flung grating shrieking on the corner: an adventurous jolt which once was an ugly jolt against the tempo of his way.

The City!—the miraculous City! No trees, no fresh sod greening: an ailanthus bursting here and there through cracks—gray cold—in the pavements. But men and women in the streets! Now he saw what teeming creatures these were, the streets and their women.

Streets and women big with laughter and children. Teeming streets, teeming women.

It was hard to recall how dead he had been that winter. It was hard to recall the streets. Gray mournful fissures they were, cracks by the cold upon the flint of a barren star: ruts in the crust of a dead world. Upon them the chill refuse of chaos was cast down. Soiled snow, soiled creatures. They crawled from their crannies and over-ran them. They bore in their eyes the Sign of exile in chaos.

Now different streets—budding teeming streets: different himself, glowing through packed streets.

Women sat in shawls on the housesteps: doors opened into reeking, into pregnant darkness: children in rags among filth of gutters: horses rattling their carts through laughter of children. Mothers had gray long breasts—they held them to sweet red lips. Mothers had shrill words—they spoke love. High noon came on the precocious sun of Spring and clarified the crevices of filth between the Belgian blocks. Odors rose to the sun not sweet like the smells of earlier Springs. And



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yet no Spring was fertile like this Spring. No stir of field with young grass, with young flowers, with margin of maples ruddy in hard buds, keen in the glint of birds. . . . David lived. David for a moment saw with his eyes how his eyelids were shut down against them. David saw. . . .

Blackness . . . ultimate texture of all colors . . . light. A world of infinite color, infinite flesh: himself within the world, himself carried within it through it. Himself of the breakless tissue of the world. Flesh of sweet smells, sweet odors, sweet fluids. Flesh altogether and altogether about him. He altogether touching all Flesh—and All. David knew through his shut eyes, walking the world, how he was carried within a world of ceaseless substance: how he was substance within it: how his moving and knowing through Flesh was Spirit. . . . He walked—he worked—he ate. He had a woman's body, he earned the bread of a man, he held the love of a friend. Flesh, all. And his moving through Flesh, his moving through infinite immersion through the Night, through the World of Flesh—Spirit and Dawn. . . . His eyes were shut. But his mouth was open! David saw with his mouth. And though he knew not he had seen, there was within him, there would be now forevermore within him, life of a vision.

The world was a Dark Mother. The Night of the miracle of worlds was fleshed and was a Mother. She moved in infinite directions an infinite path. She was moveless. And he within her, moving with the world toward the movelessness of birth.

David was unborn. But his mouth sucked vision. Sucking the Night sucked vision. He slept again. Slept long. . . . Slept years. . . . But he lived.

David and Tom came back from dinner: they sat together for a last smoke in their room: the world they willed came to

be. David lit his pipe: it was the one smoke that gave him comfort. Tom sat gloomy, nervous, flicking his cigarette until he had destroyed it, lighting another. He tore open his collar as if he needed air. He whistled the last half of a tune, stopped, met David's eyes and broke from the strain of their mutual discovery by jumping up and gazing into the night. David did not budge. The room was filled with a strange restraint. Somewhere a struggle was, in which his mind grappled against a sinuous opponent. Why did he have to struggle even with his friend for the friend he wanted?

He was sick of struggle. Was not all struggle a lie? Life was work enough. There was no repose even in strength. There was no repose even in pleasure. David thought of Constance. Yes: even *there* was work. Was respite in weakness? David doubted, seeing Tom, thinking of the pelt of his wit, the curves of his mind striving for attention. In death? . . .

Tom was back of his chair, standing above him. He put his hands about David's neck, drew them close.

"What are you thinking?"

David was silent. Tom's hands drew closer.

"I could choke you," he said. "—if it weren't that the cigarette smoke gets in my eyes."

They laughed together.

David was sure he understood. Tom would change. Tom must change! When Tom changed it would have been by David's help. Meantime, he must abide by him, not tire, and watch. For David could not easily endure the ways of his friend. He might well know what they meant: he need not therefore deny his unhappiness before them. . . .

Yet unhappiness must be too heavy a word. Discomfort rather. The base of a friendship such as this between them must be happiness. For the base was solid!

David knew little how he built on this. Without faith in

Tom's absolute fidelity to him Tom's infidelities to himself and to the world must have been insufferable. But with this faith, all the rest of Tom—his excuses, his associates, his excesses—were urgent reasons why David could not turn from him, must come closer. Tom said: "You are my best friend. With you I am the truth." This was the Law whereby David took him. All else Tom said, Tom did, was in its very contrast emphasis of the truth. All else could by it be redeemed and solved. Let the Law however not be shaken!

What if the Law was an invested fort he had at times to defend against misgivings? against Tom's own behavior? Was he not full of an unuttered life that invested contradictions?

David's contentment was unshakeable. It took to itself all hesitant things, made them over. He wanted to feel that with him as with Tom, the truth lay clearest in their lives together. How was he so different? In business? with Constance? He also had his sophistries and abdications. He took pride now in this kinship. It gave an added spell to the haven of their friendship where they withdrew from a falsetto world to the lone reach of the truth.

Soon David forgot the hushings altogether that were needed to create this haven. Subsided were his doubts with Tom, his blanchings when they drew close, the lack of visible background to their friendship. It was strange: their friendship was deep yet what vistas had it leading back to a common source, what forward avenues of life? It was full of fire, this friendship, yet where was its warmth? It was needful to him, yet what rest had he of it?

David who had sucked vision could forget. . . .

## XI

CONSTANCE BARDALE had left early that Spring for Europe. David could not say that he really missed her. He had great pleasure in looking back upon the reality of them together: a certain satisfaction in the prospect of her return in the Fall. He was not prompted to wish to hasten that return. He did not know if this was missing her.

He was like the warming weather. He had his days of retrogression, even of chill, when his mood was overcast and moist. But there was ever the underlying progress into Summer. All of him seemed opening. All of him was turned toward some generous source of energy within that made him fresh and green. He was resilient with growth. The squandaries of the world had no effect on this deep calm of his state. He moved in rhythm and with no jarring upward. Even so does a flower, despite the crust and the stone it must push through. The observer might have deemed him motionless: a poor observer who could have said the same thing of the flower.

He had said good-by to Constance naturally enough. That was the most delightful thing about her. She compelled candor.

She moved among hat-boxes and deranged chairs draped with flowing garments.

"David, I hope you won't be bored without me. Come. Good-by. You had better run along. You'll only be in the way when aunt arrives." She traveled with her aunt. "If you feel like it, write me."



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She kissed him swiftly on his lips—and even then, though in her one hand was a pair of shoes, in the other a pile of lingerie, and though her eyes were upon the door expecting her aunt to open, still there was passion in that moment. She was a wonderful woman: a true American in specialization. She had managed to pack her trunk and pack away her lover without placing passion in the bag or meticulousness on her lips.

David went satisfied, without a hint of her ingenuity in bringing this about.

And now his emotions were relieved of a fixed objective goal. They could waft outward, vaguely. David found delight in their vagueness.

It was the same, though less pointedly, with other dwellers in his life. Cornelia was always and largely removed. Unconsciously, David kept her and wanted her so. He saw her not more than once in a fortnight. He did not really see her then. He talked to her; looked at her; listened to the sounds of her voice which easily resolved into the accepted syllables of words. But he was deeply unaware of her. And sadly. Since she bled for this and was yet unwilling to shock her boy into a knowledge of his selfishness.

She knew she might have. Had she said: "David, you are far away. What is between us? David, look really into my words, look really into me. Don't you see how I suffer when you remain outside?" David would have come to her indeed, like the half-tamed, clumsy cub he was, into her arms and begged for forgiveness. But that could not be. So Cornelia, also, was pleasantly removed for David. And this was good, since then he could read into the picture those details he liked: delete the others.

It was the same with Business. It was always so with Business when one so wanted it. David discovered that Business was more like a woman than he had discovered women:

in its reticence, in its immediate response to his desire, either to be all taken up and quick with it, or to be left spiritually alone. He found as his moods veered and alternated, so followed what he could give to his affairs downtown. If he was full of energy to spill and full of fancies to weave, Business was a romantic game that grappled him and spent him. Mr. Barlow had taught him that. But if he was misty and gray and low, Business became a habit exercise that barely held his mind, unobtrusive and gray like his own forces. And without disaster. He could plunge into it, work upon it with every muscle of his body. Or he could hold aloof and run it with two disdainful fingers. He could thrust eyes upon it close, and have joy of its jungle of tropic passions, or poise it philosophically from afar, as a flat patch in his life where he grew his bread-and-butter. Now he was holding it endearingly aloof. It was an accommodating thing that used up just enough of his time and energy to leave him peaceful and ruminant at night.

Even Tom was away. He was gone West on business. David did not write. He made no effort to touch the actual departed friend. He dwelt with his own vision of Tom, unhampered now in his deep will to find it altogether perfect. For the nonce, this wearing struggle to hold it perfect was over. This Tom in his mind had no unfitting angles. Nor the Tom abstractly speaking to him from afar.

That morning, he had received a letter. It read:

*Greetings, dear friend:*

You were going to write to me first and you have not, and so I write to you, because I am thinking of you this evening, and that is the time to write, is it not? I have been thinking good things of you; it seems to me that your flavor has precipitated, and that I feel the form of you, as I never have this past short year. I find myself in consequence in an apologetic mood—and perhaps you will accept even that

and not be repelled, since you have accepted so many moods of mine, and been dear about them, and filled me slowly—I am aware of it now—with a respect and an admiration and, yes, something deeper than these, of which my actions and my omissions were scarce able emissaries. You are away now, while I am in Chicago—silently away, since you have not even thought of me to write to me, and I find that I do not blame you at all: that I admire your taste and your silence, and that I shall look forward to whatever response this brings of your deigning with an eager gratefulness that surprises you no more than it does me. Tom chastened: Tom in full view at length of a loveliness that he sensed and went for, perhaps as one goes for the summit of a mountain: the moment one is upon the trail, all one's energies are lost in climbing and fighting snags and underbrush and rocks, and the summit is beyond eye and soon out of thought: yet is it the less for *it* that the unblazed trail is dared? You are a very rare person: you have given me so much of myself that I shall be happy of you, even if I continue in this mood of being mad at myself that I did not give more. And yet what more could I have given? Would you take more, David? It is true that I have an excuse. You found me in the flush that was really the sign of a true decomposition, a deep giving away of my nerves that might have been ruin in one less trained to fighting. Or that might have been nothing in one less addicted to work. You see, work-to-success seemed necessary to me. When I do no work, my mind gets me into trouble: I am a geyser of wastestuffs: if I cannot empty myself into work, I am likely to empty some one else in a perverse replica of play. You have seen that, David. I worked while I should have been in some happy clime watching the skies and bathing and walking and smoking pipes of peace (if only pipes did not make me sick): I worked while the day's task used more than the night brought of strength. I neared bankruptcy, but being an American that did not bother me—and I put on brighter colors for the approaching doom. In the crisis of eight years of this, you found me, David—: and what a dour childhood of preparation before it! Endless, endless. Working for Cornelia, working for myself—working toward nothing. For I am in it still. I shall try to put off the day of bankruptcy until I am fifty or more: then liquidate by



dying. But you caught me in the first cold experience of being weak and sick and unable to spend prodigally and not feel anything but bulging coffers in the morning: in the first terrible condition of knowing I must work, though work was vile, and that no other work was present for my hardships. That, does it explain my sudden horridnesses, my fevers, my cruelties to us both—your word? I am not cruel, Davie, I am full of love. Oh! why won't you—you and a few blessed others whom I need the knowledge of in this fearful gorgeous world—why won't you *understand*? Can you not see me going out into the streets of New York—yes, even here in Chicago—full of love for the dull men and the stricken women, ready to give myself to them all, if only they would take me—take me a moment——: full of love for the magic of their flesh and the mystery of their life and the splendor of their anguish? Oh! David, I love so much more than there is in the world willing. I am a sea of love cluttered in a basin. And when I am cried a little welcome, I mess everything up in my attempt to fit to a mortal measure. I have spoken to you—we have even quarreled—about little children. Don't you see why? Why I was enraged at the idea of your *speculating* upon whether you wished a child or no? Identification. Suddenly, I am a child, and I do not care a damn about reason, I want only not to be left outside and unalive by my beloved. Often when I speak to a man or woman, Davie, something bleeds in my breast. And then I have headaches, and the wise doctor says: use 'brakes'—do not give yourself so much—walk the streets *indifferently*. Easy, eh? *Indifferently!* When all of life floods all my senses like a corybantic passion: a perpetual sea of infinite elements each of which is attached to my nerves and to my heart. I cannot help loving people, so I hate them. For they are not what I would have them be: they are deaf and they do not love me. And children—whose lives go before me out of my hands and my sight like the horizon and the skies—is it a wonder my hands are stretched after them and that I suffer at my impotence? But, Davie, I am not cruel. I love—and I cannot reach what I love. My hard-headed lawyer friends quip me, calling mystic my wandering thoughts—the best of them. But I am filled with a sense of dimensions, flaring and parabolic, and the world their sense is comfortable in, is a strand of what I feel



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and see: and the magic that draws me to the world is the fact that it careers in an element outside myself. There, perhaps, imprisoned in the flesh of a woman is the thing I love—and I am outside—oh, fatally outside. If I open that flesh I am laughed at by blood and death. Life—life, I seek it. For I see it: and it is maddening to be alive.

This is a funny letter, is it not? But you must understand, and never again call cruel the man whose eyes are forever full of the vision of loving, and whose body is a prison, a terribly real prison—and who knows that the world is a bewildering texture of abyss and reality, of filth and flowers. I shall go hunting, killing myself through life, David, simply because I am hungry. Do not forget that. I know the falsehood of the game. Do not forget that either. My real self, my mocking sense of life, my outrageous need of love, of love, of love—that will go silent to the grave, when the gods have had their laugh of it. For truly I am a little like a toyboat that the gods have placed upon the waters, and blown upon, that scuds its pretty maddening moment, steerless, useless, against the inevitable stop on the pool's other side.

Write to me.

TOM.

David's day was pitched by it still higher. His moving through the life of the City had a lyric lilt. Its meanest shred came to expression in the tune he hummed. Until Mr. Barlow said:

"Is that the one song you know?"

David stopped. His energy was only for the moment without outlet. He jumped up, and used it to propel his body.

"I don't feel a bit like working, this afternoon."

"There you are, thinking of this as work! Can't you get cured of that, David?"

The young man stopped at the desk of his Chief who had become his friend. He was pensive. He put one hand on the blotter and looked beyond the labyrinth of papers.

"How differently you and my uncle look at business! He prides himself that it is the most serious and laborious work in the world."

"That is his play," Mr. Barlow twinkled. Then they laughed together.

"You see," he went on, leaning back in his swivel-chair and blowing the first fragrant puff of his new cigar into David's eyes, "you see, my boy, your uncle is a romantic figure. That is why he takes business so realistically. I am a new generation: oh yes I am, despite my age! I am a realist: a man who sees exactly what there is to see: that is why I take business romantically."

David thought this a bit topsy-turvy. But he had no way out; he started figuring Mr. Barlow's words. Mr. Barlow kept blowing fragrant puffs up toward his face.

"That," he went on, "is the reason why your uncle is so much more successful than I am." His soft red lips curled cheerfully and he sent a mighty wreath of smoke as salutation against David's nose.

David pondered. His uncle, who saw too little of the world even to understand the slightest of its parts, was by his ignorance able to take Business as the whole, throw all of himself upon it, and be rich. Mr. Barlow understood the pattern of life's parts, was able to make a pleasant game of that portion of it where he found himself. And he earned an excellent living, even if he was not rich.

"You are happier than my uncle."

At once, Mr. Barlow was pensive.

"Happiness is the biggest fraud of all, David. Have no dealings with it. If it tries to make terms with you, cut it dead."

David noticed a peculiar trait. When Mr. Barlow's face was in repose, as now, there was a sweet sadness upon it. But he could change this. It was as if he were aware of David looking at his sadness. His quick clear eyes began to twinkle as if this were in itself a joke.

"We must not compare happiness. That's all nonsense."

"What then is serious?"

"What is serious?" He leaned back and took David in. "It is serious that you should leave this office this very moment and go meandering as your fancy prompts. Go! . . . Get along."

David ran for his hat.

"Well, that is for my happiness, is it not?"

"It is not! It is for your health." Mr. Barlow looked very stern.

David hesitated at the door. He came back to Mr. Barlow's side and once more, this time timidly, put his outstretched fingers on the blotter.

"You know how much I appreciate you, don't you, Mr. Barlow?"

Mr. Barlow took up a letter, screwed his glasses grimacingly to his nose, and began to read.

"David," as his head moved swiftly from side to side in pursuit of the words, "you are wasting your free afternoon."

Now David was not wasting it. In his pocket was the letter of Tom. In his head was the cheer of Mr. Barlow. Before him and above him swarmed the amazing City. . . .

He was on a street full of department stores. Women of all ages hurried past him, talking, ceaselessly talking. In their hands were the signs of the battle they loved to wage: packages, purses: in their eyes the promise of further conquest. David felt that he was in a strange, not hostile land. He was tolerated here, because he was not noticed. He stepped into a long, dense building. Endless counters packed with women led away in the bustle and gloom. Voices were not so high as the press of feet and the surge of skirts. Stiff men stood above the buffeting hordes like monstrous curios in their white linen and their flaring somber coats. Gaslamps tremored under the oppressed ceiling as if they stood guard against an

invasion from below. It seemed that the fragrant feminine commotion would swell, rise and sweep them out. David was stifled already. There was no room for him, there was no room even for air to breathe. He was in the street again. Here the flood had interstices of day: the day broke with its blue gleam upon the ranks of the women: splintered, but entered in and spread a living lightness through their heavy marches. Here one could see, not a mass alone, sweeping the street, but individual women with faces and eyes. Here even one saw pretty women.

David had not known how many pretty ones there were. It was bewildering, this extravagance of nature. The street was of stone and brick, it reared its jagged way through the world, loaded with the metallic cut of cars, flanked by the sibilance of uneven roofage and façades and the clamor of advertisements; it fell swift into smallness beyond a Square. Here it was arrogant, it domineered with its wide high skirts of stone and its bonnets turreting aloft—the shuttle of feet like a leather lathe beneath. And yet, immersed in it, David found that it was soaked in charm and that it drew his senses. For he had picked out the presence of women: women that had lips and warm bodies and whose arms could hold children. At once these were the street and were greater than the street. In their domain he was walking.

He was not wasting his free afternoon. This was health indeed. It was health to feel this pour of a thousand homes upon him: all of these homes' secret tenderness and passion. It was health to shake his head at the hard buildings, and know them worsted by women! . . .

But tiring. David boarded a car.

The car gave a lurch. The movement split the car's inhabitants into two separate groups: they who smiled and they who grumbled. David was smiling. Clumsily he righted himself, he found that he did not wish to change the position

of his eyes. They were looking at a little girl, who had been smiling also. But now, the two were serious looking at each other.

She was a little girl riding beside her governess. She had great black eyes. The gleaming iris almost crowded out the white. She had brows that were high and thin and arched and between her brows and her eyes the flesh was dimpled.

She tilted her head backward and smiled at him.

David gripped his seat with his two hands, and smiled at her.

She was beside an opaque cutting thing that was a woman and was a governess. Thick glasses tied to a black string that ended in a hideous enameled clasp on a white starched waist. Eyes shiny and convex like the glasses. Nose pointed down, mouth cutting in, chin pushing upward. And beside her a loveliness that came across the car and that he held now far from the car and the street, in his silence.

It came to David softly that he loved this little girl. She smiled at him, as if she thanked him and were glad. Could he put his love in a smile and give it to her?

She stirred in her seat. She tossed out her legs, first one, then the other. She threw herself back so that her legs thrust out, she met him fully and beamed on him.

She was unafraid, beyond all he had ever known. What could he give her, and do, to show her his love?

He had his eyes and his smile. To give her his life with. He put words into his look at her: till his eyes had tears of their fullness. He said to her so:

"Little girl with the gray fur bonnet and the gray fur coat and the laughing soul, I love you. I have never seen you before. I shall never see you again. I shall always see you——"

She was smiling so clear! What did she know? What did she not know, perhaps? Pain stopped the words of his

eyes. He got up. He passed her. Why could he not touch her, why could he not come and play with her where she lived? A little girl!

He stood in the street and the car groaned past him. She was kneeling on her seat and her face pressed against the window. She was motionless, gazing into him with serious lovely eyes while the car swung her away into the trackless future.

David's lips moved: "Good-by. I do not understand. . . . Do you? . . ."

She was gone.

Many things were gone.

David, walking the dim sunless City, walked as through himself. And as he went he missed the lights that an hour before, of their own cheer, had lit the corridors of his being and made him all, all of the City, so glad a habitation. He missed these things, he learned how many they were.

He did not think of the strange little girl. She had been fleckless beautiful. She had been more than that in the miracle of her spell upon him. For this he groped. In his mind was the vision of her budding life, sweet, ineffably sweet like an unopened rose in the dew of the dawn. She had left a wound in his heart—the stab of her vision—from which now his blood seemed unstintingly to flow.

He thought of himself alone. Sudden all his proud contentment was away. Not clouded, this time, as it had been so often. Away. It was gone surely, like the little girl.

His contentment. What then had it been? The parts of it that were no more he could piece together into a memory of his contentment.

It had been a haze covering the way of his feet, blinding his eyes, wrapping him in darkness. He saw now. He saw that his feet had carried him a way different from the haze of his contentment.



He thought of his emptiness. He seemed to recognize it, now, as if it had long been there. The absence of Tom and Constance—was this the absence of two great parts of his emptiness permitting him at last to know them—since their absence was in a measure their negation, the first timorous return from an emptiness that filled him to a fullness that he lacked? He could not go in very far. His mind was strangely cramped with pain. He knew much, however. He knew he did not love Constance and that there is no substitute for love. He knew he did not fully respect his dearest friend and that for this there was no solace. Most of all he knew his life was sterile: despite its blandishments and its colors, its devouring of hours, it lacked something he needed. Something he needed as he might thirst for water in a land that held everything else.

Sterile work: sterile friendship: sterile embraces. It was not so simple as this, but here was the germ that desiccated him, turned his impulses from action, deflected life from living. *He did not live.* Thence came that he did not risk, that he went safe, that he won materials and pleasures. To what end since he did not live? He compromised with love, he compromised with dreams. That was the technique of his succeeding: to cheat his body into love-affairs, his mind into business, his loyalties into friendship. To what end since he did not live? And if the miracle was, that life lay in the risk rather than in succeeding, in love rather than in the love-affair, in the dream rather than in any fact?

Oh, he could not understand. He did not know what to do. If his ways were wrong, his relations false, how could he change them? He dragged through a morass, not knowing.

Now suddenly, his clear thoughts held within them, as if in an embrace, the little girl. He saw the resilience of that fresh young life: its pride, its firmness. He saw how it must stoop and bend and *give*, if it would avoid the pains that waited it



growing into the world. If it would win ease, it must lose—lose all that made it lovely! Lose its fine fresh sweetness. David pondered on this. Would that election satisfy him? Would it be well to see that loveliness gray away in price for the escape from pain? He heard his answer clear. At all costs the bravery of youth, the firm coolness of which her flesh was symbol—at cost of any pain, of all defeat!

A deceiving gladness came to David: a gratitude that he was still somewhat like that little girl. . . . Had they not smiled at each other?



## XII

THE train swung Tom southward from Chicago about the duned neck of the Lake. The sun broke at last in clear sky upon him. The everlasting smoke sank behind like dust of a departed battle. . . . Tom had the vision of the town of his childhood.

The train was swimming up the path of the sun. The world cut flat from the train's stride like a sea from the prow of a racing vessel. The horizon swayingly scooped: trees low and faint in the shrill sky, nude in young leaves, lascivious in blossoms, almost bowled over by the roll of the world—and the blue belch of sturdier chimneys beyond, scattered half-acres of hell spewing soot and shadow over a scarred and flowered prairie. In his eyes now an old sick town. . . .

The long street swooned under foliage. Trees crowded between the two rows of houses as if they had burst them apart. Under their arrogant verdure the little wooden boxes of men crouched and were smothered. A man came out from the dull pressure: he walked into the sway of the trees: he went forth to his toil: he was immersed in the redundancy of fields.

Tom went back to the town of his childhood armed with his intelligence. He thought he saw with understanding. Through the window of the train, he found his face fleeing across the prairie. "I understand," he whispered to himself.

"I understand the tyrannies that oppressed my people: the tyrannies that formed them. The vastness of the soil and of its fruit: the dying spiritual world my fathers packed with them from Europe, and into which they tried to cram—what

new bursts of passion, what new world's splendors! I see what treasure and promise were these fields and hills—and the little hands, the littler minds and tools with which to work them. Of course, there came blindness upon the dazzlement, penury upon their drunken spending, fear of the Spirit upon their rape of the Earth. What masters my fathers must have been not to have been mastered by America!"

Tom understood why the men of ripe New York were shrunken midges beneath the stuff of their buildings: and the still unuttered fate of Chicago: and why Chicago, with its long soiled lazy hands, had held his heart.

"I am of the West. I had forgotten—but I am of the West! To think that ten years of New York could have made me forget. Chicago claimed me!"

New York was a place of exile. There they whose lives were done or were denied builded State upon the principle of their death. New York was a gaunt, ghost City: a dwelling place of shadows that towered above men.

What was New York against this splendor of plains, against Chicago? wide crude child city with the loud voice and the playful heart, with the swift gait and the lumberly laborer's mind? What was New York against the love of his discovered home?

Tom began to wonder what irony had drawn him Eastward.

"The promise of life?" he whispered to himself, "the promise of life?"

His chair was toward the window, he spoke to his reflected face and the fleeing plains. A knoll of green flashed past with a stream curling and in the shadow a clustered farm: the remembered scent of clover and the warm sweetness of new green life were a cloud over his mind.

"I wonder, does the lure of death come always disguised as a fulfillment? Perhaps, when a man takes his life does he hope to achieve it? Cornelia and I—God! how we were

glad of the calculated pavements of Manhattan." But surely, he had left death behind? Was he growing sentimental? What a strange mood he was in. His father, the dilapidated farm—life, that? Very well: law, the nervous flutter he called success in the city—life, that, more? He shook his head. He saw he did not understand after all. . . . And yet, America in Chicago—Chicago in the American plains—gripped him and called him as never before. . . .

Chicago? where Industry, a dirty giant, flung and heaped its refuse upon the dwellings of men? He could not understand. But he felt a poignance—of symbol—in himself yearning Westward, yearning *backward* against the way of the train to where America lay impassioned beneath the coming sun.

He stepped into New York, its life came to him through splinter of movement with a sharp pathos. The dust of their traffic were these men and women swirling slow: their impress upon the places they had built was naught. An air of enervation lay over the clefts of houses, seeped down into the channels of men.

Then Tom lost the sense of separation. The great Metropolis came like an iron cloak and made him invisible. . . .

Out of the confusion of his life he saw some things clearly and aimed at them: he saw some things vaguely and these he avoided. He sensed that the vague things were the vital: were of the color and stuff of that confusion which was his life: and that the clear things were trivial and lying.

Marcia Duffield and King Van Ness were not yet engaged. A particular and naked problem. Tom feared the cynicism of the girl he had loved. "One thing, one thing alone can spoil this," went his thoughts. "If she out of some mood

abandoned her resistance. She might for spite, bravado, bitterness, what not? One such false gesture and Van Ness stops the hunt. He might possibly do an injury to himself: grow thoughtful for instance. But he'd never marry a girl that let him kiss her without a diamond ring."

Laura Duffield held out her hand for his. "I am young yet. This is my only life. What am I doing with it?" Tom thought and clasped the hand of his friend and laughed—the lust of the Game, Van Ness, Stone and Company to be pried open, the delicious recalcitrance of Marcia to be tasted and crushed—and forgot.

"You are worrying about something? What is it?" At last he was conscious of Laura Duffield: his trivial words were over.

She was ageing. There was a drawn tightness about her eyes, a sag at her throat. It was a day on which she was not looking well. And looking well was coming to be an art, these years of life when art grows difficult. Debts. The incredible burden of holding up her head.

"Come and sit beside me, Tom."

She was graceful. The couch was low. She sat ensconced in a corner, her outstretched arm hung in a flimsy sleeve, color of faded violet. Her skin like the sleeve was dim. Her eyes and the stones in her rings were bright.

"You are so quick to understand. I am going to tell you. I'm worrying about Marcia."

"That won't help us, you know."

"Why can't she make up her mind to love some one?"

Tom laughed. "What a lot of contradictions in a little sentence!"

"I don't know—I don't know what we may have to do."

She seemed, after all, resigned. If Marcia could love no one, with her mind or without, let her stay single.

"She hasn't accepted Van Ness yet?"



## THE DARK MOTHER

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Laura Duffield shook her head.

Tom thought swiftly.

"Where is Marcia? Is she in? Tell her I am here?"

The mother arose and called the girl. Marcia came to the door, stood silent.

"Hello, Marcia. I came to see you, this evening. Not your Mamma." He believed it. He wanted to be with her—all else was a pretext.

"Yes: and it's lucky too," Mrs. Duffield bustled to her desk. "I have a thousand letters to answer. Do be dears, and leave me alone."

She was settled and her back was on them. She was looking better. Such confidence she had in Tom!

He followed Marcia. She went to the opposite corner of her room: near her cheval glass. She stood there. Tom closed the door, let his weight lean upon it, then seated himself in a broad arm-chair. Her whiteness was taut: her black hair and eyes were hot. A tremble swift and faint sang through her. She found she could not stop it. She moved and took up an ivory brush, she strove to let her trembling flow from her two hands to it. It was a very long time since Tom and she were alone.

"Marcia, please sit down."

She complied at once: she flushed with anger that she had. Tom came and leaned over her. He looked obliquely at her great black eyes and the sharp perfection of her chin and the way of her white throat. He put his open hands on her hair, he turned her face upward toward him. He placed his closed lips on her parted ones. His hands slipped down her face, her neck, her body. He stood away. She said:

"Why do you do that, Tom?"

"That is how I feel."

"Don't lie, Tom."

"I am not lying, Marcia."

Her eyes blazed up. It was a burst of bravery and challenge. They crumpled. She hid her head in her arms, she wept.

Tom put his hand firmly to the back of her head where the hair was caught away from the neck.

"Listen, Marcia, I am not lying. Listen, please, Marcia."

She was silent, if she was still weeping. She did not raise her head.

Tom leaned and kissed her neck. The faint scent of her hair in his eyes.

Marcia straightened sudden. He met the attack of her gesture.

"Now listen, do you hear?"

She stayed balanced, looking at him straight: her eyes filled with an ironic hunger. So Tom wanted her. He began before she changed.

"You have never understood me, Marcia. I can't blame you. I have never understood myself. I am honest with you. I have always been. Perhaps it was expecting too much, dear, that you should be able to stand that. . . . Marcia, I care for you now, as I did before, more than for any woman in the world."

She dropped her eyes and began to finger the embroidery of her chair.

"I go through strange tides, Marcia. I cannot help that. Most men have hypocrisy to hide these ebbs. Most women have passiveness. I have neither. So I suffer. . . . Marcia," he went on, "I do not want to lose you. But also I do not want to hurt you. Can't I have you, without hurting you, Marcia! It was because I had not answered that question, that I forced myself away, forced myself cool."

"What do you mean, Tom?"

He took a chair and brought it beside hers and seated himself. With a great calm he heard himself say:

"Marcia—will you marry me?"

"I should love to, Tom."

"We could manage. I might even gradually start to pay off your Mamma's debts. A little flat. Two weeks at the sea-shore. A cook. . . ."

He spoke very seriously, with each item stroked the slender pearly hand he had taken.

Marcia withdrew it. "Don't be a silly, Tom."

He jumped up. He drew her after him: he held her close, kissed her throat.

"It is not impossible. I want you, Marcia."

"You have had me."

"I have never had you." He thrust her away and walked to where she first had faced him. "You know I have never had you, Marcia. How can you—oh——!" He threw up his arms and stopped.

Marcia came closer. "Tom," she said, "what do you really want of me?"

"Yourself. . . ." He paused. "But without the sense that I am harming you. Yourself, without restraint."

"Why did you leave me, Tom?"

"I'll tell you. Despise me, if you will. I'll tell you. Because I had a guilty conscience. Because I thought not alone of your future but of your mother. Because I seemed unable to be either your lover or your husband."

She smiled.

"You're not the sort of man one should marry."

"Unfortunately I lack qualifications." He put bitterness into his voice. She was sure—and glad—she had hurt him. "But civilized standards have nothing to do with love. I could love a woman, if only she were in a civilized way disposed of, so that we could afford the luxury."

Marcia laughed and placed her hand back in his.

"Why have you never put things this way before?"



"Never put things this way before?" He was amazed. He burst out laughing. "Really, my dear, this is too ironic. I had given you up: I had given you a free hand to marry. I was prepared to lose you permanently rather than stand even temporarily in your way. But you did not marry. What did that mean? I didn't know. How could I? But what should keep me from hoping? Any fool may do that. At least there was the circumstantial evidence that you had not married. That is why I came to-night, Marcia. I came to ask you to marry me. To plead with you. For the first time I was prepared to sacrifice you for my own desire—altogether. And now, when I am acting my most selfish self, for the first time you see the sacrificial mood that I was in before!"

She placed her arms about him.

"Strange contradictory dear. . . . You shall have me, dearest. Wait and see how soon. I think I never wanted you quite so much."

"Marcia!"

"Don't let your feelings blind you to reason, Tom. *Our* feelings. You don't want a wife. If I was rich—or you were—even then, would you want a wife? You want *me*. I you. Without alloy, dear. I'll marry King."

She smiled brightly.

"Do you know why I put it off? Because I thought it might mean real captivity. It must have, Tom—without you, there, to rescue me. Oh," her face darkened, "I could not stand the thought of him without the antidote!" She was silent, brooding. Her eyes seemed full of the picture of her life with the dull rich man. It stifled her, blinded.

"I could not have stood it, Tom. I can now! Without you, it must have meant prison. Now, it means release—adventure. Yes!" She seemed to be emphasizing her resolve

—bringing it clear before her eyes to see it. “You’ll see that I am game. I am almost happy.”

She sank down in her chair, and smiled at him; tears kept her from seeing how he smiled a bit wistfully away.

She needed to be silent. If for no other reason, for the tears.

She wanted to ask him simply: “Do you *love* me, Tom? For Tom, if you did *love* me. . . .” She did not dare her question. She did not dare, even in her silence, to conclude it. She was afraid of his answer. Both for him and for her she was afraid. Both of his “yes” and his “no.” After all, her mind faded and veered, she had better marry King. It would be going on.

She was dry-eyed.

Tom took her hand and kissed it.

“What do I really mean by all these things I do?” When Tom was alone his question came often, came without answer. When he was with David, it hurt and these things he did were like ash in his mouth. But even the hurt was better than the reverberating silence. So Tom fled solitude.

But what of David? What did he want of David? Was he glad of him or bitterly, passionately sorry? Did he want him close or far away? His acts and moods, were they designed to hold or to repel him?

Tom was at a pass where all these things were chaos. The clear facts of living were straws in a heaving sea: straws he reached for. He went brightly about his profession. It prospered. But it became more and more a thing to hide from David. And all such things were more and more to be hidden from himself. Marcia was engaged. He feared her marriage which he had manoeuvred, vaguely, as the time of a demand he could not face. Also he looked forward to

her marriage: the senses of him: his blood and his wits as well. Marcia's marriage must be a function of both.

He tried, close to David, to blot out his conflicts. He tried to realize that it was David himself who brought about the conflicts: and to pursue the rational conclusion that it was David who must be blotted out. His reasonings had the way of playing him into some dark dilemma. The forces driving him toward the constant agitation of his wits seemed all too clearly irrational and heart-sent. He could not isolate the verbs of his reason. If he did, he found them without subject, object—dead waifs of sound flecking a hollow mind. His reaching for the true drive within him left him a streak in imponderable Space, as if he had grasped a Comet. It was better to be confined to straws.

The schemings pertinent to Marcia, straws: the intricate work downtown, straws also: the being with friends, the satisfaction of his senses, straws again. The effect upon his mind—this passionate bestowal upon work he could not respect, upon pleasure he could not enjoy—was a slow desiccation. He was dry, cynical, erethic. He needed to rouse himself to heights of activation: his work called for no less. And the impulse rousing him was ever one he was cold to. A strain on his nerves. As in a man making himself drunk with drink he forces himself to swallow.

Needfully, since this vast disharmony gained on his life and since each part of it warred against the others, Tom came to bestow upon its various factors the quality of respite and escape. He needed a makeshift harmony in order to live. One instant of admitted anarchy in our minds means madness: in our bodies death. Since discord was there, it must be balanced with other discord. One group of his thoughts swelled, sagged out of place: he propped it into a semblance of poise with another hypertrophy. So discord propagates itself. Life went on.



David was there to cleanse him of the tastes of his worldly work, restore his self-respect, give him a vantage point against the scheming Tom of the day. His other friends—shallow, quick fellows ready to give what he asked and forward-coming, helpless women like Laura Duffield—were there to balance the reticence of David, ease his diseased hunger, throw him momentarily free of the strange dissatisfaction of his one satisfying friendship. The function of work was to sustain him, flush his energies until such time as he knew how he wanted to play. Marcia was compensation for that in him which could not look to David. David was compensation for that in him which was ashamed of Marcia. His hours with David and Cornelia were sleep in which he lived as he dreamed, won strength to face the waking: his hours of work were respite from the starved clamor of his dreams—a way of winning time from their insistence.

So his life stumbled and shook ahead. It held together. But it was textured of half-true, half-meeting elements. Its hazardous solution caused a continual ferment. The sign of ferment was his growing pain in a life stumbling, shaking ahead.

He walked down a Square with that lithe pacing stride of his. Half clenched fists swung at his side. There was a fairly constant strain in his eyes that lifted them in their sockets. With teeth tight set, he hummed a tune. Energy was forever thus escaping from him. When he did nothing, he fell at once into a state of preparedness for flight. He wanted to get away: get out. He could not. Life gripped him and he loved it. But much energy was born of this deep impulse to escape. He scattered it about. Much he applied—and applied to perfect the conditions of that very life from which his nerves rebelled. His vitality in talk, his speed of impressions, his plasticity of posture in the world grew from this energy. So that he shook along in a vicious circle. Much

of his power to throw life into his work came from the secretions of his dissatisfaction with it: from the energy of his dissatisfaction. But life is full of such mechanical paradox. All of civilized life is such a one. Many a man succeeds in the conscious world because of the failure hidden in his heart.

Tom stopped. He was before a crumbling brownstone house: a rusting iron grille, a gate thrown out on useless hinges. A tiny plot of grass flanked the narrow walk. The soil was rocky: sediment of the City—cans, flakes of cloth, splint eyes of glass—choked the slim green. From the low stoop the house flared up, soft in decay.

Tom turned his back on the house. He looked North on the Square. In his eyes was a hunger for open places. His glance consumed the narrow breadth of the Park with its dapper walks and its trees. It broke impatient on the row of red-brick houses. It spent itself. Tom's gaze narrowed. He turned and went up the stairs. They were dirty and dark—four flights. Odor of mildew and misspent lives seeped from brown plaster.

He struck his fist on the door. Behind him was a hall painted the color of stale chocolate. In the center of the fly-blown ceiling a sudden cupola, picked out in glass—green, yellow, blue. Sky came through dim and soiled.

A young stout fellow opened the door and gave a cry of pleasure: let Tom in.

"Hello, Rennard! Flora. Florissima! Company's complete."

Tom pressed Lars Durthal's hand. "Hello, Lars," he passed him.

A long narrow table spread in the square small room. The heavy mantel was ribald with knick-knacks of varicolored glass, purchased in useless shapes at Coney Island and Asbury Park. Their gayety, adance in the boxed mirrors of the yellow wood, seemed irrelevant above the table, with its high

unlabelled bottles of red wine, its mounds of Italian bread, its platters of cervelat, tomatoes, sardelles. The table's order was disturbed by its broken wreath of guests.

Most of the diners lounged already in their chairs. Between laughter and smoke they sent their eyes lazily toward the kitchen. They had begun with their wine.

"Hello, Mr. Rennard," a slender fellow spoke, upon whose long neck poised a head remarkably round and small; within his face with its fat sanguine cheeks the eyes and mouth and nose took up an inconspicuous space.

"Good evening, Marquese." Lagora was a nobleman: a dealer in marble according to his one report, in Italian oils and spices according to his other. A clever, shifty, cloudy fellow with hands like a girl's.

Tom sat down with an air of temporariness beside him.

"Well, Dounia—comment ça va?" He leaned and placed a finger on the cheek of the woman across the table. Dounia Smith put down her glass. "I've no cigarettes."

Tom placed a box in her expectant hand. They were enormous hands: gaunt, naked, acquisitive, with a wrinkle about the finger-joints that was sinister against the smooth calm of her wrists. Behind her hands, Dounia Smith rose diminished. She was tall, handsomely cut: her hair swept black and low over her temples: her eyes had a gray slant that offset the thin lips, the sharp tilt of her chin. When she lighted her cigarette she showed all of her teeth. They were white. But as the gaunt huge hand came near her face, the rest of Dounia Smith went into eclipse.

A man came up, neatly and drably dressed, with a red tie that flared against the pale primness of his face.

"Glad you're here, Rennard. Business particularly boring, to-day. Fun particularly needed, to-night."

This was Christian Hill—sedate, rebellious—a man of business who craved intoxicants of life. All his sentences

sounded like telegrams. All his money, too sanely earned in a broker's office, was at the disposal of his search for madness. He looked on Tom as his ideal. He would have sold his wife into slavery for a lust sufficiently great to make him commit the folly.

"I want to introduce you," he beckoned toward a girl that had sat yonder beside him. "Madeline—this is Mr. Rennard—Miss Gross."

She came sidling. She was richly clad, very blond, very powdered. Beneath the simper of blue eyes, the hot curl of placid lips and the ringlets of blond hair teasing her tiny ear, Tom saw that she was Jewish.

He took her tiny hand, gloved in fawn-colored kid.

"It is nice to have you here, Miss Gross. I hope our rough manners won't shock you."

She propelled herself a little nearer.

"Oh, please do, Mr. Rennard!"

"You want to be shocked, Miss Gross?"

Hill intervened. "But you can't, Rennard. You don't know my little Madeline."

The little Madeline simpered and tapped her escort's mouth with the back of her gloved hand.

"How do you know, Christian? Just because *you* couldn't." Bending her body back, she threw her head back also. She gazed at Tom through the lashes of her half-shut eyes.

Durthal came up.

"Your place is there, old man. Between Lunn and me."

"Good evening, Flora. Say, you have room for Markand? I made him promise he'd be here."

A thick-set woman, with face incredibly composed and large bare arms crossed over the gray width of her dress, nodded to Tom and to the others.

"Good evening, Flora." "Hello, Flora," the greetings came.

Flora did not budge from her place in the kitchen door. Hill dragged Miss Gross through the scatter of chairs.

"Oh, Signora Sanni," he said, "I want to introduce my friend."

Flora Sanni wiped her right hand slowly, methodically on her apron.

"Buena sera, Signorina." She took the gloved hand, dropped it, turned about. Her eyes were steel. She had taken longer to wipe her hands on her apron.

Tom moved in Durthal's power toward the nearer end of the table.

A young girl shut the door.

"Here you are," muttered Lagora.

She nodded timidly to her neighbors—maliciously to Dounia Smith, a defensive malice—and sat down beside the Marquese. He drew close his chair. The two began muttering together. Lagora leaned forward. The girl bent back from the thrust of his mood and his body. She was a frail creature—a tissue of harried nerves with great black teeming eyes. Her hand tapped on the plate. She lit a cigarette, inhaled a great gust, emptied Lagora's wine glass and then blew out the smoke. Her body was draped in a short tight smock of blue hung from her shoulders. Her tiny breasts stood up in it quite clear. Lagora's brows worked up and down. Her big eyes sharpened and cut him. He looked at her twitching shoulders.

"Hello, Mr. Rennard," she cried as she passed him. She threw up a diminutive hand. Her breasts bobbed.

"How are you, Lettie?" Tom, taking her hand, had the sense of Lagora smiling with snakish eyes. He passed on.

A lumbering boy got up, nodding and saying no word.

"Well, Darby?" Tom sat down. "I've not seen you in a week."



"A long time," synchronously growled the other. Tom heard him and laughed.

"And the painting?"

Tom and Darby Lunn were lost together in talk. From the table's farther end Durthal saw them together. The laugh of Dounia Smith, the shrill sneer of Lettie tossing her heels, the mutter of Lagora were a wave, gathering, crumpling upon the calm of Signora Sanni. Durthal extricated himself from Hill and Miss Gross. He headed through the disserried chairs. Stretched arms reached for wine and tastes of anti-pasto. The evening splintered and swirled. Food would draw it together.

Durthal stood over Tom.

"Here, old man. Change over. You sit between us." Finding his seat, he also had the sense of haven beneath the spray and scatter of the room.

Of the three, Tom was the only one whose voice carried beyond them: laughing. Dounia Smith eyed him with a tilt of her head. A finger, like a talon, flecked her cigarette. Her brows were thin and straight like the stroke of a sharp pencil on hard paper.

Flora Sanni stood above the table, with a vast white bowl of *minestrone*. The crowd coalesced.

The table narrowed. The chandelier, relic of fluted brass and drooping crystal, took on the tawdry tone of office and gave its light, self-consciously, heatedly, like an old servant, too laden with memory and years to want to work for so crass a gathering. The carved clock ticked: a clatter of plates drew down bent necks, beading foreheads. Sharp streakings of sound ribboned the table: swathed it: covered it with a warm liquidity. Then the whipped undertone of selves seeped up again, lapped over the inorganic sound, deluged it, drowned it in angular surge of assertions.

The door gave a knock that was heard at last. . . .

David had followed upstairs a pair who were held to slowness by the constant claim of the woman that she was too weary to go another step.

"Come along, Phoebe!" The man had a high straight back. He wore a soft collar that bared his neck. David observed that it was wiry and clean. The hairs were clipped high from it. David had time to observe. Whenever the pair came to a rest, he rested behind them. Something impeded his passing. Timidity in part. The disclosing thereby that he had overheard them, that they were moving too slowly. His own scarce unconscious resistance to mounting those stairs at all. He hated the place. But he had no reason to give to Tom. And Tom took offense at his not wishing to come.

"Why, dear man. Don't you like Flora? I think Flora is splendid. Such poise! Or is the place too noisy for you, David? Davie, you must get accustomed to dirt!"

A vehemence in Tom that silenced David. Doubtless this was life, and life no thing to shrink from.

"But I do like Flora!" He could not add that he felt that Flora did not like him: did not seem to like any one who came there: nor the feeling that if she had known him different and uncomfortable, perhaps she would have liked him.

"Well, then!" said Tom.

The stout lady was sighing. "Why we ever come here, Jack! These stairs!"

"You know it is lots of fun, Phoebe. Go along now. You like it as well as I." He spoke immaculate English, and urged her with a slap on her rump.

"Well, the people——"

"——the food?" he chuckled. "The mysterious bottom of Signora Sanni's pot. One more hoist, old lady. Th—th—ere! Where else, pray, can one meet such a delightful assortment of bulls?"

"Don't call them bulls, Jack Korn! Call them detectives."

"Here we are, dear."

David and they entered together.

"Korn, I *am* glad to see you!" Tom reached over the table and greeted him. "How's business?" He had nodded to David and Korn's woman with a perfunctory politeness.

"Meet my dear friend, Mr. Korn," he laughed. "Same profession as myself." The three sat opposite Durthal and Tom and Lunn. Mrs. Phoebe Raymond was on one side of David. On the other sat Dounia Smith. All of them laughed, except David.

He looked at Korn. A big, athletic fellow, clad in somber serge. He had black hair and a significant nose. . . . Why had all of them laughed?

"I have never seen you here before, Mr. Markand," said Phoebe Raymond.

"I—I come quite often."

"Well, I don't," she looked full at him. "One gets so little time." Her round face was pretty. But it was fat: its petite features were lost in flesh. Her bosom obtruded like a robin's breast. David seemed to see, investing the round comeliness of her mouth and nose, layers of sloth and greed. A scaly dimness was already over the blue eyes. "I like small gatherings more, don't you?" she confided. "One could get to *know* a person then." David had the sense that if he drank enough of the wine Mrs. Raymond would seem very pretty indeed.

He began to eat. Words pattered and burst about him. The food had an exotic charm. The air was full of heated eyes and bodies. Glances and edged remarks trembled like flung spears in the flesh of the women. David kept still and went on eating.

Phoebe Raymond tried to engage him in talk.

"My husband and I were in Maine at the time. Do you know New England, Mr. Markand?"



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"Of course he knows it! Can't you see it written all over him, Phoebe?" It was Tom drawing her away. "How dare you talk to my friend about your husband! Have you no sense of decency?"

The immediate half of the table was his. He played it like an instrument. His eyes were too bright and too hard, thought David. He had little to say to him. To Durthal and to Lunn, to the women on David's side, to Hill even and Lagora, he had more to say than to David. Most of all to Korn. But he looked often at his friend—sharp glances while his attention swathed from right to left. David was enmeshed in his running comment: all Tom said seemed to run through him and knit him.

"It is hard not to be moral," he said. "One is pushed so into good behavior."

Jack Korn sat back smiling. He was a strong man. He was very quiet.

"What do you think of good behavior, Korn?" Tom asked him.

"It is as good a game as another." He paused. "Surer."

"But why should we want to be sure? Since we are already sure of death? Look at Dounia, there. She has never done a risky thing in her life. Run over her investments. Burton, Klein, La Soule—all good gold bonds. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, my dear. You remind me of Markand's uptown relations."

"And what are you crowing about?" Dounia retorted. "You're as safe as an eel."

"I have at least the good manners to be ashamed of it," Tom laughed. "To hide it and even lie about it. I am gaining strength."

He looked admiringly at Korn. "Here, old man, I drink to the logic—to the beauty of your life!" He held forth his wine glass.

Korn raised his to his eyes, nodded and sipped. Tom drained.

"Did you get that, Davie?" he said. "The contempt Korn showed in answering my toast? I do not blame him. I've never earned his respect. Think how he must despise *you!*"

Korn did not turn his head. Lunn grunted and smirked—in his plate. Dounia and Phoebe came to David's rescue.

From Dounia: "I am sure Mr. Markand is br-raver, much b-raver than you!"

From Phoebe: "Jack, deny that you despise Mr. Mark-and."

Tom drove ahead. "But I'll earn your respect yet, Jack Korn. I may be earning it now. . . ."

Christian Hill was nudging Miss Gross.

"He's a wonder, is Rennard. You must get him. The other man, the one in the black suit, Madeline, *he*—he is—" Hill whispered in the young girl's ear. Her fork clattered: her little eyes lost their dim cunning: became bright and large.

"Really?" she gasped. She gazed at Korn and was speechless. Her hand went to the old bead bag in her lap.

Talk like a comet drew to the head of Tom and Korn. They held it: they swung it: it was a dazzle of gyre to the jerk of their directions. At the farther end of the table, Signora Sanni came and went: sat imperturbable. She was a woman of more than forty. Disillusion was sweet in her firm, strong face. It was a preservative. It did not keep her pretty, it kept her content. Her features had set. It was as if they had thrown away their woman's tricks of blandishment and surprise: as if they had sold their power to impassion at the price of passion itself. At her side were Lagora and Lettie Dew. These three alone were intact from the ebullient pull of the other end of the table. Lagora was incapable of an objective interest. He ate seriously, he spoke



to Signora Sanni, he nagged Lettie. The eyes of Miss Dew wandered from their circuit between her plate and the ceiling, to David. For a moment, their gaze softened; something swam in her eyes, something stirred like a cloud's rift in her mind. With a violent gust of smoke—for she smoked incessantly—she blew it away.

"But I maintain," Tom said, "that the law makes the game all the more delicious. The more rules, the more brains to overturn them."

Korn smiled and nodded: "Goethe put it—'In der Beschraenkung zeigt sich erst der Meister.'"

"What does that mean?" Tom was held up.

"Just about what you are saying," replied Korn.

"Well, then, Goethe is right." Every one laughed except David.

Tom raced: "I like obstacle races: I like hurdles. Society is made up simply of men who run flat, like you, dear Korn, or go in for steeple-chasing, like myself. Now, I have a friend—tell me, Korn, what do you think of this for manipulation . . . ?"

It was amazing, thought David, how little Korn said for one who held such sure attention.

"—with the girl married, he controls her life. Do you see? Of course he must pay his minimum—let us say his taxes—for that. But say what you want, love or no love, there's always about the same ratio of satisfaction in a love affair. Eh, Dounia?" he baited her. "Come, Dounia, tell us for once. Down with the veils. Is there so much difference whether you love the man or not? I am convinced that woman's pleasure is utterly subjective. Who gives it to her is of no consequence—unless she lets herself be imposed on by Society's mandates, standards, sentimentalities. Won't you enlighten us, Dounia?"

She looked at him with a defensive sharpness. How did

he guess how women felt? how utterly subjective passion was—at least in her? Phoebe also stirred back in her chair. His arrows were scattering too near. How could he tell—he was peering mischievously at her—that she strove often to forget her man in order to be happy with him?

“You see, she won’t tell. These women who think that being dumb is being secret. As I was saying, he controls the lady. And she controls her husband. And since he is high in power in the world downtown, my friend controls that also. No prettier, no more outlawed game could be imagined. I maintain it is pretty enough, Korn, for your praise.”

Korn chuckled. Tom raced on.

David had the sense that in a circling way he was the goal of Tom. Tom threw out flaring lines, struck here, flung there, with himself as center of his operations.

He lost this sense. It was replaced by the poignant one that Tom ignored him. If anything remained of the earlier impression, merely that the avoidance was planned. Tom paid more heed to every one in the room! His attention was flattering and was canny. He baited Dounia, but Dounia could not bait him. Durthal and Lunn were subsidiary strings that reënforced his theme: and the women. He wove his complex music with the lives and thoughts of all those present. And when he noticed David, it was to prod him—to hurt him.

Then, still another sense. David began to feel himself separate from this noisy element he was immersed in. He put forth spiritual fingers to explore it. He drew his shredded findings in; he began to explore himself.

He felt a hazardous balance, swung safe from fall by an impalpable thread, between himself and this room: himself and Tom. Even the gaslights, naked and stiff and hot, were elements of Tom. He was on the other side and was alone. But there was a joy in the experience of separation. He was

apart, impregnable. He could poise somewhat the laughter, the surge, the flection about him; arrive at himself. . . . Was he impregnable after all? Why, then, hurt?

. . . Wine soaked soft these men and women—these prisons of sense. Sense swirled unhindered upward, danced with spiraling cohesion beneath the gasjets. . . .

The door pushed open again. A man, dull shouldered, with heavy head and tread and unlit eyes, came in and nodded and sat down at the end of the table beside Korn. With the door wide for a moment a strange world stood in the hall beside the room: a world, cool and hidden.

He was also an accustomed guest. He came with heavy breath as if each breath lifted a weight of flesh against some obstruction in his gullet. He nodded dully, with a brighter gaze alone for Tom.

"Too bad you weren't here earlier," said Tom. "The law needed your defense."

"So?" he was dully aware. His eyes peered out, like a big dog's, disturbed at feed.

"I think Officer Murphy might do well to ar-r-rest you all," said Dounia.

"Oh, you wouldn't have him do that," cried Hill, with a slightly trembling voice. "It is such fun breaking all the Commandments."

"So long as glasses are not broken," said Tom.

"How is work, Murphy," asked Korn with a serious full face whose irony was far beyond the detective's wit.

"Oh, slow . . . *glp*. Ain't much . . . *glp* . . . doin'." Murphy looked up and down the table, interested at last, lacking something. "Say, Flora," his gross voice thrust out. "A little of the red?"

The gathering paused momentarily about the intrusion: swirled about it. He was a gap in its midst, a load on its vital spirit. His fleshly dullness must be smeared over with raillery and



laughter. The crowd began to digest him. Murphy disappeared.

His heft, now dissolved, was an added strength in the room's swelter.

Tom rode the wave of broken personalities and whipped it and steered it. Lagora forgot his duties toward Lettie and tried to make love to Flora. He flattered her. He owed her money. He thought it might be well not to have to pay for his dinners. Signora Sanni flicked off his words like flies. She was learning the unlikelihood of being paid. And Lettie Dew, released, allowed herself to gaze full and long at David who was back in the storm taking its breast, distinguishing no thing. Phoebe was moist and breathing hard. She was safe, however, beside Korn. Her sense of safety crowned with smugness her bibulous affection.

"I believe truly," she said to David, "we should be going." She had said this over and over. It gave her the excuse she somehow wanted for finishing each succeeding glass of wine. She spoke measuredly. She was passionately anxious to have David know she was more the lady than Dounia Smith or Flora.

Lettie leaned over and smiled at David. Very suddenly. David smiled back. Lettie scowled. David was hurt. As soon as he looked away, her eyes were once more on him.

Miss Gross, cool, unliquored, chuckled and took the varying scene; she wondered why Mr. Rennard evaded her diagnosis. She knew that later, Hill would try to kiss her. He would take her home in a cab for no other purpose. She was debating whether she wanted to be kissed by him, or no. It might be fun. He was a married man! There he was pendulous, at her side. He looked down more daring at her light-lashed corsage. How far dared he be mad—was Madeline worth madness? The price—: He was dismayed to find himself sobering under his question: deciding against it.



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"Damn it!" He jumped to his feet and brandished his glass. "Let's be—let's be——" his voice died down: "—— free souls, to-night."

He found his seat limply. It was his tragedy to be sane. This Madeline Gross—pretty though she was—was not yet the creature for whom he expectantly and religiously waited: not yet the love for whom he was to abandon his wife and child, with whom he was to be lost in the sacrament of irreparable Folly. Not yet. Perhaps never! He was sober. He put a bottle to his lips and emptied it. It gave him a stomach-ache. He began to recall that Madeline lived far uptown, and that a cab would cost a considerable lot of money.

The night was mellow and soft. It grew smeared with the sweat of wear: hard with broken clusters of decay. It was over. . . .

Tom and David walked homeward in silence.

David knew one thing, and it hurt: Tom had been showing off to the man called Korn. He had one question. At last he asked it:

"Who is Mr. Korn?"

Something quailed in Tom. He took his answer, flung it brutally against his quailing.

"Korn?" He was looking ahead, far ahead. "Korn—why, Korn is a pickpocket."

There were no more words. They went down the hall of their home: each entered his room.

Tom closed the door. . . . It was very white and very quiet and clean. He sat on his bed. Resting his chin in his hands, he went on looking ahead, looking far ahead. Seeing nothing. The alarm-clock was obtrusive with its tick-tack-tick. The window was open from the top. A faint breeze made the white mesh curtains stir. Tom felt a soiled self

sitting on the bed, felt soiled feet on the tidied floor. Tom felt a desecration.

He was up. He was almost like a somnambulist. He was in David's room. They were looking at each other.

"I have done nothing. You fool, acting as if you were guilty!" he said to himself.

"Yes, Tom?" David did not understand the stillness.

Tom was in conflict. "Are you sure—are you sure you are not guilty?" Words cried to be spoken. He had none.

"Don't be shocked, Davie," he spoke at last. "One must meet all sorts——"

"I am not shocked. But it is strange. He seemed so intelligent a man."

Tom pounced, with passion of relief.

"He is intelligent, Davie! That is life. You don't know how life is lived in New York. There are no sharp distinctions, Davie, between criminals and honest men. . . ." He stopped. That sounded wrong. He plunged in, to make it right. "——What I mean is, the ways allowed by the law and the other ways—there are conventions, Davie. Nowadays, to get along, a young man must break in, must break in somehow. Strictly speaking, that is never quite a righteous——" He stopped again. David looked with gentle eyes: was Tom pleading, was Tom pleading for Korn or for another? Tom's rage came sudden, a birth of weakness. . . .

"Look here," he attacked him, "what a prig you sometimes seem, man! What do you know about life? You who have always gone a greased path, sliding into fortune! Do you think all men have uncles to do the cheating and the robbing for them?"

David's fists closed. He held himself. . . . By God, was Tom right?

Tom felt his victory. He was enraged still more. He struck again. "If we all had the fat lap of your aunt to coddle us,



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or the pure lips of your cousin to teach us love for nothing! Perhaps you think that any man who hasn't some one else to lay the dirt for him had better stay under? A lot you know about life."

"But Tom——"

"Look about you. I don't apologize for Korn. He is what he is. He is the typical social being. Nakedly. The rest of us think we are the pretty names we are called by."

He stopped. David was silent. A great fear ran through Tom.

"When you learn, David, to be a man, to give a little understanding—you may deserve the friend you have."

Still David looked at him, looked beyond him, searched for a reason. Tom went out. It was as if the air that enveloped David sucked him backward.

Once more Tom was in his room. Its clear white calm was unbearable to him. He would be less harried in the dark. He shut off the gas. He flung himself upon his bed. He could not bear the darkness. He could not bear the light. Doubtless, next door, David was quietly taking off his clothes. Slow, slightly puzzled—unbearable David! Oh, he could murder! He jumped up. Something dim, something gray, something dirty and simple and soft: this was his need. He rushed down to the street. . . .

Reaction. . . . Tom was contrite. He watched David sharply, aloofly even, then did some good thing for him. Some intimate thing none but a loving eye could have devised: and with a quiet tact. So there was David more bewildered than before. But not David alone. He understood no less than Tom. The storm of their relationship seemed moving toward no issue.

David was sick—a little sick.

"You shan't go downtown, to-day, do you hear!" com-

manded Tom. "This is a busy day for me, but if you don't give me your word you'll stay home, I'll stay home myself to make you."

He went out and telephoned to David's office. He came back with a doctor. Tonsillitis.

Tom nursed him. Mrs. Lario found there was really little she could do. David had an assortment of dainties to sip. "This won't hurt your throat." He had books. He had a splendid array of cushions architected for his back to prop him for reading.

Mrs. Deane came and found her nephew lying happy in the large front room.

"More sun," Tom explained. "It was no job moving the bed."

"It is wonderful, child, how Mr. Rennard nurses you. I would no more dream of interfering. . . . You do not appear to be very busy downtown, Mr. Rennard."

Tom laughed. "Oh, no, Mrs. Deane. Nothing to do at all. But do not give me away."

David understood.

"Supposing work does go to hell? It won't. But supposing it did? Pooh!"

David could not forget such things.

Nor, in their light, could he forget Tom's accusation that *he* was selfish: that *he* had no idea of service. This one rift there was in the harmony of Tom's helping: a certain flavor of rebuke as he served, a certain stress and reminder. "Here is how *I* serve my friend." Yet David could not be sure. The rebuke he felt in Tom's ministrations for his own lazy selfishness might altogether lie in his own guilty conscience. What did he ever do for Tom? So far as he could see, what did he ever do for any one at all? His life was a sliding down greased paths. Fortune or no fortune, what hold had he on the way? Lying there on his cushioned couch, he



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found himself wishing Tom had not come back so soon from work in order to see how he was. And wishing this, he felt his guilt the more. . . .

In flashes, like blaze in an empty sky, the emptiness of David came to him and filled him and gave him great hurt. Whither indeed was he going, and where was he? If Tom was querulous, irritable, weak, if Tom scoffed at his relatives, refused to be serious about his friends and would hear no word of his loves, what was David to complain? His relations were nothing to Tom: he knew too well what earthy ones they were. Had David respect for his own brief amours? Was there one of his relationships with man or woman that was noble, that lifted him up? Was there one, who worked for him and served him, as Tom did? Tom was faulty. Yes. But David was a monster in that he seemed to partake neither of the virtue nor of the sin of man. He was a trimmer. He was clamped down in some chill Limbo. Knowledge came to him, even now, of his idle and empty ways, like lightning in a lazy summer night: flashing and gone, muttering afar, doing no work upon him.

He was a spiritually sprawling creature. He had no coördination. If his heart was touched, how did his mind respond? If his mind, where was the response in deed? It seemed to David that what he did wore away the energy of his mind, dulled his heart: and what he felt and thought became impediments to those acts which his living called for. He was a loose-bound bundle of life, rolling down a chute. . . .

In the fall, Constance Bardale telephoned to him.

"I am back. When can you come to see me?"

It was always hard for David to meet a sudden situation on the wire. He needed a face and a warm smile to talk to. He was afraid he had been dull in greeting Constance. For so long a time he had not thought of her at all!

"Then, I'll expect you Saturday to tea."

She had not suggested an evening. The choice of the formal hour meant nothing to David.

"I must make her know—somehow I must make her know I can't go on."

David said this to himself, going to see her. He did not recall that he had failed to write since the apparition of the little girl in the car. The poignancy of that vision was faded. But it had left its mark. In its loveliness it had blighted certain ugly things in his heart: disappeared. The condition whence sprang the ugly things was still in David. He was not cured. He was merely bitterly aware that he was not well.

Constance Bardale appeared different. Her new Paris gown was strange and stiff and he did not like it. She was far away within it. Even her voice had the apartness of alien adventures.

She took his hand swiftly and manoeuvred him into a chair.

"It is good to find you so flourishing. What *do* you get out of New York air to make you flower so! I thought of you particularly in a little Normandy town where we stopped with friends. A Napoleonic Baron—very plebeian that, for France. There was a gardener—of the château—who had the one true aristocracy. A big brusk fellow. How he adored his flowers and his vegetables! He reminded me of the way you are sometimes."

David thought how hard it was going to be to break the news of his resolve to Constance. It dawned on him now that it might be unnecessary. Of a sudden, "She has decided for me!" he announced, amazed, to himself.

He looked at her. Once more she meant discovery. For months, now, she had been far from his senses, but his mind had thought her close. Now his mind knew her far away, and his senses clamored.

They were at a point far anterior to their first warm



meeting. No hint of intimacy: no hint that it had ever been: no credible sign that it could ever be. She talked fluently, her words and gestures took on for David the nature of a sinuous veil, a blank blue of smiling nugatories behind which the woman he had known retreated.

Apart from her now as he had never been, he wanted the warmth of her nearness. His resolution to break off was a dim thing. He could not understand it. He sat there and had forgotten it. This helped not at all. Her way with him was beyond the mutability of a resolve. It seemed a natural condition.

It was as if she had looked on him never closer before. She was a lady with all the aloofness of her sex: not one to let him fling off her clothes, let him lie beside her. The hope was monstrous of what once, without hope, had been fact. It was over. . . .

In his chagrin he could not find the comfort even of supposing that she had sensed his decision and simply gone before him. He could not lave his hurt in the thought that his long silence, with her in Europe, was perhaps an introduction she had understood to her own course. He was like a child: so aware of his own grievance, and of the sanctity of his mood, he had no knowledge of hers. Like a child he came away, routed, fascinated, fingering over and nursing his several hurts.

But, looking back, what humiliated David most was not these bruises to his pride—was rather the dispatch with which he had recovered from them. Neither the revelation of the little girl had held him, nor the shaming lesson at the hands of Constance: neither inspiration nor defeat. He had a slow pervading sense of his unchastened nature. . . .

He dined with Caroline Lord. No rare occurrence; but this time Constance was no more, and for the first time Miss Lord said:



"Let's try to amuse *ourselves* for a change. What do you say? Don't you think it's a confession of no resources to be always going to the theaters? You have never been to my apartment. Come and see *me*, to-night."

They walked up a residential avenue east of Central Park, where the cars swerved swift and remote between sedate, slow houses. They climbed a high brownstone stoop. They passed through a corridor echoing faintly with their steps.

She lighted a table lamp. Color spread out from the emerald-silk shade above a tidy stack of magazines, showed the room close and impeccably neat. Each chair was in its place. The broad couch with its upstanding cushions was smoothed of wrinkles. Gray curtains stood discreetly before tall windows.

It was a cool room, methodically pitched. David found himself not terrified by its neatness. Miss Lord seemed to be glad when he sank down on the couch and rumbled it. He let his head lean against a steel-engraving on the wall. They both laughed. A new Miss Lord.

She was letting David talk. She was silent, so the "moral tone" was silent. Her body spoke and after all it was a lovely body.

David chatted. He was out of himself. His words came frictionless. His words slowed down. He was aware of the stimulus that had taken him out of himself, that had made him chatter. . . . Caroline. Lord. He saw her. Hands rested in her lap: white strong hands in a wide strong lap. A body luxuriantly full: it was strong. A wave of light from the lamp touched her hair, made it a glow in the room. . . . She had without words a maternal comeliness: she looked down, while he spoke, at her hands with a girlish reserve. . . . David got up and kissed her.

She flushed and did not respond. He kissed her several times.



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He was up to leave, she stood close under him. She was warm. A certain discomfort kneaded her firm body, cloying it. She took his hand, looked down at it, she looked up to his face, not quite meeting his eyes. She squeezed his hand and pressed it against her waist. She said:

"You can't really care for me, David?"

So David knew he did not really care. But she had one charm: the joy there was in bringing a timid flush upon so strong a body.

He came frequently. He delighted to kiss her. Caroline Lord loved to be kissed.

She had not planned this. She had in a deep way planned nothing in her life. But she had the gift, as each new fact dawned on the rim of her world, to be convinced that she had ordered it. Since David was there,—the nephew of Mr. Deane—and since her senses loved his kissing her, she planned a marriage.

The unfortunate circumstance was this: by the time she had hatched her plans and cleared the way in her mind, she had already tasted the delight of being kissed by David. And this was unfortunate because she felt as part of her campaign toward marriage the need of circumspection in such advances as kisses.

David noticed no change at first. Miss Lord feared to go too fast. She had a sickening sense that she might lose all in her effort to gain all. She found herself shamefully willing to temporize, and to enjoy the evils of the day.

But as he held her in his arms, her little shifts began.

She said to him: "David, you do care for me?"

"David, if I felt that you could misunderstand why I let you kiss me, oh, David,—it would kill me."

"David, what is going to become of us? I feel that we must be doing wrong."

David began to feel how she was indeed asking him a

question. She was expecting something of him. He must give her an answer.

He said to himself: "She wants me to propose to her. Oh, I am sorry!" His passion was gone.

He was too kind abruptly to stop his visits. It would have been the kindest thing to do. But David was not egoist enough to know it. He came less often, and left her alone. He tried to talk to her. He realized how little talk there had been in the happy visits: how fully those evenings of delight had been evenings of kisses. The talk wearied him; the "moral tone" was pervasive and obtrusive.

"Give! Give yourself!" her blood cried against her temples.

Had she given, she might have won at least a part of him. David was in no state to resist self-bestowal. Unknown to himself, he was wandering through life, seeking the life that would exchange with his. Nowhere had he found it; without vision of that he would be ever tantalizingly remote from capture.

He was swollen in her senses, now that he held himself stiffly away in his chair and listened to her words. Her power to take-in flooded her body and mellowed it, left dim her eyes whereby to see him. She saw his sweet heaviness beneath the drab of his suit. She had a sense of her fingers running through his hair, of being drunk with him. And it was possible! The room was quiet and suppliant. The lamp was dim for such secrecies. She fought against herself, and passion ran through her, melting her, drenching her, like tears.

But she was a lady. She had not reached thirty years to be seduced by a boy who would not marry. . . .

His visits filtered away: ceased. Again he invited her to an occasional lunch. In his heart, from it all, there remained chiefly self-rebuke. He had not been a gentleman. He had



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kissed her with casual flippancy: she had not understood. Why, he wondered, was he so superficial in his way with women? Why was their hold on him so slight? This was not love. Tom must be right, and love did not exist. Friendship was the deeper, lovelier passion. . . . At times, he recalled the little girl in the car or his mother. . . .

An added year upon the emptiness of David.

He had a dream. He was in a pit—or was it a well? He groped round and round its circular bottom. He looked up. Far beyond his eyes was a dimness he knew was Light. It hurt him to look up. It made him dizzy. It made him tremble. He groped round and round. . . . Then, he stopped. Quite still. The bottom of the pit swung up and struck against his eyes. Tom lashed him from behind with a whip. "Go ahead!" Tom muttered. David faced about. The well began to swing maddingly around with shattering strokes like a vast piston. The bottom where he groped swerved up, went up, high, high. He had the sense of a terrific altitude. The well was upside down. He was tumbling, rushing down the well. Beneath him, infinitely far, he saw the dimness he knew was Light. . . .

David awoke: horror crept over all his flesh. He clutched his bed. He lay there stabbed by every mutter of the night.

It was long before his mind that was cowering far in a corner of the room came back to him, sat with him, took away his fears: before the stirrings of the dark silence ceased to be a shatter and shriek in his nerves.

It was long before he forgot the dream. He made no effort to remember it. A dream was a bit of nonsense. Nonsense also that its mere coming to his mind brought back the streaking of darkness into veins of horror. . . .

It was not long before he put to himself for the first time a question: What was killing the friendship between Tom and

himself? For an uncharted time, he had been in fever, in trance; he had not looked at all. Now, seeing with sudden eyes, he saw their friendship and how it had changed, and how a blight was on it.

Always there had been flurries of irritation; swift misgivings; shadows. How much else there had been! Warm communion: the sweet living in Tom's strength and in the knowledge of his caring: the sheer delight of watching his clear mind cut through the mists of life, like a bird soar and sing over his head. Where now these delights? . . . It came to David how, for a long time already, they had not been. . . .

Tom came home without taking his dinner. He was not hungry: also he knew that David would be out. He sat motionless in his favorite straight-back chair and took the storm of his senses with heroic grimness.

In such an hour, David's absence moved him obliquely. He was glad of his solitude in their room: fearful of the tread in the hall that must break it. And yet, he was listening, yearning,—suddenly possessed of the sense of something missing, and that thing vital, and that thing David. He caught himself back, in an eternal question: "If he were here, what would you say to each other?"

This raging schism there was in all his thoughts: he yearned to hold David, and he yearned to be rid of him. Two monsters, these desires, feeding upon each other, feeding upon him. He helpless against them. If he wounded the one, its hurt was strength to the other. How could he kill the one, without being overwhelmed at once by its opponent? In their balance he was torn away by conflict, yet in their balance he was saved from some black annihilation he could not envisage. How could he lose David altogether? In what realm lived his wish altogether to have him?

David came in.

Night had crept up sweetly from the street. The City



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brooded in memory of an August which had come like a woman's madness. It was still warm. A breeze came dancing through the open window. The room where Tom sat rigid seemed faintly a-swing in a sea: the glow and scent and murmur of the City was a wave, heaving the room. The wind whipped it gently.

David came in and saw Tom sitting so strangely stiff; he stopped. Tom, this time, had not budged. He looked at David. He saw his open gentle face and its sweetness, he knew how unbearable it was that he should lose him.

"David, won't you come and sit down?"

David came. Crossing the room, he stumbled on the rug.

"David . . . what is there wrong between us?"

His head was turned toward his friend. David looked; there was Tom's full face pleading toward him. His eyes were bright in the shadow: they glanced with a sharp pain and a great welling wish, like tears.

David's hand instinctively went out: he rested it upon his own knee.

"I don't know, Tom. . . . I don't know."

Very faintly he spoke. There was a warm moistness in his mouth.

"David, I am sorry! I am sorry for so many things. But I love you, David. I am your real friend. . . . You believe that, don't you?"

"Tom, I don't know how."

"What have I done to make you doubt my friendship?"

David's chance! Simple and naked stood the issue between them. Let him but meet it. Had he not grievances enough? No: he would not say "grievances." Had he not reasons—inexorable reasons?

He sat there, looking away toward the window. Swiftly, now, it was getting dark. The frame of the window seemed very far away—dimly etched out against the surrounding

darkness. The window was light. With a vague stir that was heliotropic, David gazed on it.

His mind had the sudden need of grasping reasons. Reasons were scurrying, scattering, melting away.

His reasons—his reasons for doubting that Tom was his friend! Where were they? Why did he want reasons, after all? Was not Tom sitting there with tears in his eyes no dimmer than this light, pleading for faith? Had he not previously understood with a rare insight he was proud of, the problem of Tom? Here he was, collecting reasons, picking up reasons! Missiles to strike with? Why? Why not? Was he not unhappy with Tom? Was not his whole life poisoned by this poison that hid in their friendship? He was not seeking stones to attack with, he was seeking defense. Many reasons there were, if only he could fasten his mind—how strange it was swerving about!—to take them up.

Tom said:

"I know—I know—I know——" He was mentioning faults. He was proving they were no reasons. "But we are friends, Davie. Oh, do you not *feel* there is no one I love like you? Not my sister, Davie! No one. Everything I would throw away to help you. My work, my ambitions—what makes them bearable, David, except your friendship? Can't you understand. . . ."

There was something wrong. Under the precision of Tom's words, something wrong. Above the clouded stretch of Tom's emotions, something wrong. Something wrong. The reasons! For God's sake, the reasons!

David began to stammer: "You tell Lunn and Durthal you are their friend. To me you run them down. How should I know . . . ?"

He stopped. Tom was silent. No: this was no reason. David *could* know. David needed no proof. He had to forgive these stupid relationships of Tom.



"How should you know?" asked Tom. "Ask yourself, David."

Groping again. There sat his friend. He felt him like a flame in the dark. Why was he, David, crouched there, gathering strength to strike him? Why could he not *accept* him? . . . Past pains, past miseries. He had not wanted better than to accept him. What had cast him off? Surely not his desire? Tom it was, who made him not accept him. He was not fighting. He was holding himself safe. By God! holding himself clean. Reasons! Reasons against Tom!

"What help do you give me in my troubles?" he said, low in his seat: half to himself: placing his words before him very near, as if to look at them, rather than give them to Tom—lest he wish to recall them. "I have my worries. I have to keep them to myself. Is that what I should feel with my friend? I have had problems with—women. If I mention them to you, you sneer or laugh or turn hard. And difficulties with my relatives—worries downtown. . . ."

"I do not coddle you, David."

How much he laid upon these words, and how these words were like a shaft—running slow from Tom to him! . . . Did David wish ease and flattery from friendship? Did David wish help that might hurt, or soothing that would hinder? David was childish and selfish. No! Tom could not take so seriously his petty affairs with women. Oh, yes, he knew about them—every one: or his untidy problems with his uncle's family or with his Chief downtown. No! he was not David's wet-nurse. If he wanted a friend—one who took him ever upon the most real level, who by dint of treating him as mature and strong might help him to achieve maturity and strength . . .

David again gazed at the light casemented from the night-packed room. There was something: yes, there were reasons. These were not the true ones. Let him then say aloud:



"These are not the true reasons, Tom." What would happen? Tom's quiet voice—he was quiet now: why was his voice not always so quiet—would ask: "And the true reasons, David?" His answer! Let him now bring forth his answer. Why was that silly nightmare protruding in his mind? Tom was a flame in the room. It burned him. Let him come to hate it, to avow his hatred!

"It seems, Tom, that we are so very far apart." Oh, but were they not near? To whom was David, these past years, growing and nearing? "I do not know how to express my dreams, my ideals, Tom. I am not ashamed of that. I have time to learn to express them. But they are real. I feel as if to you, they are not real. You have no love for them . . . no faith. . . ." He was silent. He went on: "When a woman is going to have a child, she has not seen it, she does not know how it looks or what it will be named. But it is real to her, and she loves it."

"Can't you see, David, that this child in you,—this dream-life at your heart—is what I love more than all in the world?"

"You are perpetually hurting me: sneering at me: stabbing my efforts to understand with your logical proofs that understanding and ideals and truth are nonsense!"

"Is this, then, why you doubt my friendship?"

"That vague thing in my heart is very near to me."

"And to me, David!"

"Then why do you say the things you do?—and why—Tom—why . . . ?"

"Yes, David?"

"Why do you do the things, and lead the life you do?"

"Oh, David, if you would help me to understand?"

"Are you sincere?"

"No, David, I am not sincere. Help me to be sincere."

"It seems to me that sincerity must be there first of all."

"We are not all so fortunate as you are, David."

"I do not understand."

"Nor I. I want to be sincere. I want to be strong enough to be always, always sincere, as I am now sincere only with you."

"Tom, what does all this mean?"

"Can't you believe me when I tell you, I do not understand? I try, Davie! It hurts. You ask me for help. I have helped you often, Davie. Perhaps most when I seemed cruel and harsh and distant. Isn't that true? But you seem to think I must be always strong. My mind—my poor mind you expect so much of, Davie—I hate it at times, because, if it has helped you, it has done me disservice. It has estranged us. I am weak, also. Oh, dear, dear Boy, I am weaker than you! You spoke of a woman who is to be a Mother. What is so strong as such a woman? Her fidelity to her child, her confidence, her vast unuttered love of which all her being is symbol. The breath she takes, the food she eats—is for a purpose. That is strength, David. Even if she cannot name her child, or call it. And you are indeed like that. You have a strength a little like that woman. I love you for that, David! I have no such purpose. When one has purpose, growing within one,—one's flesh and blood,—it is easy to be sincere. When one has no such purpose, it is hard. . . ."

"Tom, you do not know how you hurt me."

"Will you stand those hurts, for my sake?"

Why should he? Why should he? What load of service was Tom placing upon him? And the reasons for this? Tom was speaking again:

"—all I can say is that all my life seems suddenly to run on edge. Off-track. It is hard to explain . . . two lines faintly divergent at first, yet how they widen! . . . Some little dissonance deep in my heart, and it creeps into all the words I say, at times, into all the acts I do: the discord widens

and multiplies. Until it—*shrieks!* Do you understand at all?"

No, David could not understand. Tom could not understand. With bleeding nerves, he had made this symbol of his self-division. It was beautifully true. But to make the symbol was not to understand it.

Yet, although neither saw, they were impressed. Tom's words were nonsense, perhaps: but they were like song. They held their hearers. The more raptly since neither knew that this was music. So birds, perhaps, listen to song and dimly descrying its beauty, which is its meaning, obey its call. David was silent. He was near Tom. A new plenitude in Tom that hurt him no less than the emptiness he had feared.

A very faint pull from himself, a very faint losing of balance. As it went on, from deep within him, invisibly deep, it widened toward the world.

Tom sat still, seeing his hurt, seeing he could not heal it. He had to watch a bleeding he could not stem. He watched it, now: with David watching him. He saw the dissonant thing that spread and shattered his world: he saw the deepest of his thrusts to right himself die far from the mark. . . .

And David there before him with clear eyes! David ready to judge him! David in search of words wherewith to judge him! . . . Tom came to himself in anger. All his effort to be, for once, harmoniously himself rose up from its defeat and surged toward David. Anger for David! If he lacked fingers long and skilled enough to remove this cancer in his friendship, setting him balanceless toward life, then let him blot it out. Let David be blotted out! . . .

He turned against him.

"The worst thing about you is that you make me take you seriously. Your troubles are nothing but selfishness. Selfishness is insatiate. So is a dull humorlessness like yours. My Lord, man, what a state you put me in just because we're



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friends—just because I want to think well of you, well of your interests and your doubts. What is it all about? Eh, tell me that. What the Devil have you to complain of?"

He stood over David and menaced him with words. "You're a spoilt child: what you need is a Mamma. If you had a spark of wit you'd roar at yourself, roar at me when I am fooled by your childishness into being tender. I am to give, and give, and *give*. If I weary or get out of breath, I am judged. Supposing I turned about, just for a change, and began judging you?"

David sat numb. The need of striking back, the need of defense—where was it? Tom lighted the gas-jets. Every gas-jet. The room showed yellow and hard. The light was like the lying of sand, the room was a barbarous arena. Tom's eyes were one with the blazing gas-jets.

Their bell.

"Sometimes I am sick, I am sick of it all," said Tom. "Sometimes I wonder what it must be like, just for a moment to be taken as I am:—to be embraced in understanding; to *receive*."

The door opened, Durthal and Lunn came in.

"You have come just in time!" he clasped their hands. "You have rescued me from the presence of my Maker!"

Lunn blinked. Durthal was sniggling already. He had caught Tom's mood, the directions of favor and attack. That was enough.

"Oh—oh," Tom laughed. "Don't look scared. Markand is my Maker. Didn't you know that? Being with Markand is a perpetual Day of Judgment. Even in the strictest Faith that should come only once. Living with Markand it never stops. Down—down one must go on one's knees. And stay there."

David felt Tom's sneers cut him and bind him motionless.

"I am sorry, Tom. I did not mean——"

"Oh, it is easy for him." Tom broke his words. He was facing Durthal and Lunn who had found quick seats on the couch, as one hastens to settle at a performance that has begun already. Tom's back was to David. Lunn was peering toward him with his heavy head low on his shoulders: blinking and smiling. Durthal beamed into Tom's face.

"It is easy for him. You see, he has nothing to confess. His soul is empty of sin. Did you know that, you fellows? He can promenade about in his soul quite freely, as one takes a stroll by the sea-shore. Altogether empty, I assure you—*of sin*. I must go dragging along."

He paced up and down. He was very bitter.

David was still viced in the hurt of the interruption.

"Well, Darby, how is the picture? It promises, my dear chap, to be the best you have done. Real improvement there. . . . No, no—my friend, you must not let that happen! Stick it out. I don't care if it is beginning to bore you. Ability to stand boredom is the mark of power. Yes. . . . Inspiration is cheap as birds twittering. Sustainment of inspiration is rare as genius. It is genius, I tell you."

Lunn was happy. Tom praised his picture: called him his friend. He sensed that the reason for all this was devilish. It made no difference. One had to take Tom as he came. Durthal glared snakishly at David: dissatisfied that Tom's onslaught was in abeyance.

David wished to right himself. Perhaps he was sulking. Perhaps Tom was watching to see what he would do. Let him try to join in.

"I wish you would let me see some of your pictures, sometime," he said to Lunn.

Lunn frowned ungraciously.

"Sure," with a stirring of his feet. "Any time."

"They're immoral, David." Tom turned. "They'll shock you. They tell the truth. They accept the world as it is."



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His voice had a sing-song emphasis, as if he were warning a child away from the fire.

"And what a world it is!" Durthal had merely been waiting. He had not dared hope that David would so aptly accommodate himself to his hostile wishes. He fell in at once with Tom's accent. "Better not see them, Markand. The women Lunn paints aren't pure: the men aren't moral."

"Think of that, Davie! Wasting his good time painting impure women!"

Lunn bobbed his long head with delight.

"I would paint a pure person, if I could find one."

Tom came up to David, and placed his hand under his chin.

"What about this?" he said.

David was stiff, waiting for the hand to go away.

"How can we be sure he's pure?" exclaimed Durthal.

"That is true," Tom stepped away a little. "We must be sure. How *can* we be sure? . . . David, give us your credentials. Your proofs. For Lunn's sake, David, Think of the unhappy fix he is in—painting nothing but wicked creatures! Think what an unselfish service you can perform."

"—if he is pure," Durthal insisted.

"Yes. If you are pure," said Tom.

All three of them smiled. All three of them fell spontaneously to this delicious game of baiting David. The ugliness of life, the folly of hope—these were their themes. They seemed to be baiting not so much David as a Dream in David: a bloom of loveliness in David thinking the world was lovely. This was the unbearable presence in the room, the maddening thing. This they joined hands and minds to blemish and befoul. . . .

David was stark with the treachery of Tom. He could manage Tom. It was bitter hard, but he could manage Tom. These others—these living missiles of mud Tom used to fling at him, now he was weak and angry:—

Tom goaded on. Never had he been so lonely, never had he needed David more. Yearning to fling himself on David's side, to his feet, his words grew sharper, falser.

"He is silent," mocked the emboldened Durthal. "Perhaps he isn't pure, at all. This *is* important, you know. How shall we ever find out?"

"But even if he is, do you think, Darby, that would make him worth painting?" Tom leaned back on his heels and poised David. "Yes," he said slowly, "he *is* worth painting."

"Tell us, Markand—*are* you what you profess to be," Durthal mock-pleaded.

David was up. He was white. He was suddenly strong and gentle.

He walked to the door and opened it.

"Get out," he said.

They sat there, rigid. They looked to Tom. The gap of the open door was a drawing burn upon them. Tom said no word. He gave a little laugh and was silent also.

Lunn fumbled for his hat.

"Guess I'll be going," he rose jerkily to his feet. Durthal rose glibly.

They came close to David. His hand held the door wide open. They passed his eyes; they strained to hold to their slow pace. As they moved down the dark hall, they had the sense in their backs of an impending blow. . . .

David stood with his back against the shut door. He had done a violent thing; he was afraid he had done wrong. These were Tom's friends. No—by the truth—these were not! But by what human right—he could not look at Tom's eyes. He had a sense of guilt. All his sense of hurt was gone before his sense of guilt. Tom stood waiting for his eyes, in order to tell him with his own how much he thanked him.

David struggled with his body: turned it about: left the



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room. He knew he would go wandering aimless through the streets. Tom was alone. His eyes had failed to give their message.

He had not moved from his seat. He sat upright, rigid. Had sentence been passed against him: and why was it good? And why were his hands so empty? A strange despair crept over Tom, stiffened his muscles, dimmed his mind. So he sat, knowing not how long. . . .

A knock at the door. Another knock. He lifted his head laboriously to see the door. He saw the room. It was cruel clear. The ugly paint of the woodwork, the neat pale paper cutting and empty against him, the rocker where David loved to sit and where he felt his absence like a poignant mirthless presence. How terrible clear was the room's emptiness and the path of something sweet that had been there and was gone! Two grimaces remained, sitting on the couch, sitting for him. . . . It knocked again. . . . He felt that he was very faint. "I had no supper," he said. "It is knocking." He knew that his head was light.

"Come in."

The door burst open. A little boy stamping in: a messenger boy. His face round and swarthy. His eyes roamed about the room like listless beasts, taking in nothing.

"Rennard?" he shouted. Strangely his eyes wandered, took in nothing! Such tired eyes: such disillusioned eyes. So weary a boy. He was not there.

In Tom's hands a letter.

His unconscious glance made him know already without knowledge it was from Cornelia. He sat, holding the letter out as his hands had received it: unopened. . . .

"What does she want?" beat sluggish in his head like an alarum chiming through thick fog.

He opened it: he put on his hat: he was gone.

This sense he had very sharp: that he was gone. He



should, he felt, have stayed, stayed in their room until David returned. But Cornelia wanted him. Coming to her, he had this detached sense: that he was gone. . . .

She gave him both her hands. He felt her face, its sweetness, its dear sweet homeliness. He saw that she was glad he had come, and that she had missed him: how she would always forgive him, and how cruelly for near two years he had been treating her.

She placed a letter in his hand. He faced it. He went to the couch suddenly and sat down. . . .

The pall lifted that was over his great hurt, he knew how he was suffering. The world had been clear—their room—and he in cloud: it had been like a shrill close lake under a hidden sky. Now all else was dim save the burning sun of his hurt. The letter was from their sister, Ruth: it told of the death of their father.

Tom hid his face, he buried also his hard hands in the cushions. That he might clench his fists and his teeth, unseen. Cornelia placed her hand on his shoulder. She was torn by his weeping.

He righted himself. His eyes were burned with tears. Cornelia sat beside him. She took his hand. She placed his hand to her lips.

"Dear Tom!" She was trying to smile. Instead of the smile, came tears to her also. She turned away her face, struggling, not understanding.

"I am not weeping for father," said Tom. "I am weeping for ourselves. . . . So are you!"

Cornelia gave way. She also hid her face in order to give way. Tom, stroking her hand, looked beyond them: from the sun of his hurt into the dim world,



### XIII

CORNELIA loved to sit by her open window and look out.

She had the need of seeing the City clear: a cold pattern. Her own mind was chaos and she saw no help to crystallize the swirling problems that consumed her. Like one who in great heat wins comfort from vision of cool waters, she thought of the City as a design, carefully plotted out.

It was not easy. Looking beyond her house, with the street swarming in her eyes and the battlemented roofs surging above her head, she was dim in reverie. In the dimness, the City lost its geometric outlines. It veered in and out of her grasp like a delirious dream: its streets were parabolas, freighted with teeming particles of life which each had a centrifugal direction. It all was a frangent swarm, knotted, heaving upon itself, forever ashift. She saw it a monstrous replica of her own mind: there was no relief.

She struggled with it. She said to herself: "What is so regular as the streets of New York?" When she dispelled her inchoate vision, also there was pain. For now she had the sense of streets cut livid through human lives: each street was a sharp thrust and heaped about it mounds of desiccated bones.

At last Cornelia shut the City out. She sat in her little rocking chair with a candle glowing, and huddled upon herself as if her pains were a swinging swarm about her. With hidden eyes she came to a dim world of thought.

She had never needed to find the word for what she felt toward David. Often, she needed to say to herself in self-

assertion: I am a woman. Her life brought doubt of that. Were women supposed, like her, to live alone and work, and have no home, and have no one to care for? Her instinct despaired often of the life she gave her body and her mind. In protest, sometimes it would speak: am I a woman? But here was a harmony so deep it required no voice outside itself: in what she felt toward David. Long since it was an atmosphere: a wide world she fed in or starved in: howsoever, lived and would die in. She did not say to herself: I am in the world. She did not speak to herself of her own self with David. Endlessly, now, she worried about him, asked herself how she could help him. Still more frequently, she asked herself how she could save him. And in her next question: Save him from what? she was already deep in her tangled problem. She was like one who lived at the edge of a dark forest: whithersoever she went, with a step there she was in it. Its tangled shadows were always at her side.

Cornelia could understand, could also not understand. She had the sense that David suffered: suffered with her brother. She had the instinct of some struggle hidden between them, and of danger for them both. She knew not what it was. So it was horrible: it was like the nocturnal stirring of unknown life in her forest. She knew it was not merely the worldliness of Tom, his efforts to make David worldly. She knew how eased she must have been to believe it was no worse. But touching upon this, the terror still prowled at large. She had no hold upon her terror.

It was years now, growing on her like the loom of a Curse. It blackened and dried her life. She lived with it. All of her being was a shrunken point, veering blindly about in order to forfend some visitation so obscure and vast that she was nothing before it. If it was fearful that she knew nothing to bring her comfort, it was fearful as well that she knew

nothing to knit her fear. She was a little swirling point under a sky that was black.

Sudden words came, like jagged movements in her mood. She said: "It is not for me that I am miserable. I do not want him for myself. God knows I have no hope of him for myself. It is not that. . . . God grant it be true that under this all, it is not merely that I want him for myself. . . . Oh, God grant it be only this! No other danger. I will face that. How gladly then I will give him up! . . ."

She buried her head in her arms, she prayed: she knew not what to pray for. She had the sense of an unholy loneliness, of praying to herself. She sprang up, wide-eyed, looked at her long, transparent hands: she said aloud: "Why am I alive?"

A thought came sweeping and cleansing: she was like a sea torn by swift winds, now suddenly a sheet of rain came down and smoothed it, soothed it. So a thought came glancing and offered peace.

"I do not have to live," it said. And that in her which alone she did not question, which alone needed no words since her whole life was its Word, gave answer.

"No: what of him? With David in trouble, I must at least be here."

Once more she was a sea churned by the winds of her dilemma.

But at least she had the faith that it was good for David that she should live. No faith this. Rather the matrix of her life—the hollow of the world in which lay her sea, however restless it beat. . . .

Through the City walked Tom. He and his thoughts were a nimble line parting the City. Through the warm weather and the thick crowds of men and women he cut. Past the great loads of stone, he made his way. He was in Cornelia's

room; it was as if his path had left a wake—half fire, half blood—where his thoughts simmered and soaked into the living City.

"Cornelia," he said to her, "what is there wrong with us?"

She looked at him. She loved him. She was glad always to be with him. Why did he not come back to her? In that way alone could she save him. If he stayed where he was——

"Let us cheer up, Tom dear. We're depressed. I wouldn't have thought that father's death could depress us so."

"You know better than that!"

"Is there anything more wrong with us, Tom, than with the world?"

Tom smiled wanly.

"How like a woman that is. However deep we rot, if the world rots as deep, no matter? You women accept the world. . . . Cornelia, that thought which to you brings consolation, would make me desperate."

She said: "Perhaps we have not found ourselves, yet, Tom."

And he: "Father's death has suddenly set me to thinking where we are: and you to feeling."

"I am not thinking of father. Ruth's letter made me think far more of Ruth. Poor wasted Ruth. And Laura—bitter, sick Laura. I think of them."

"Are they the only victims, Sister?"

Cornelia was pale. She drew back in her chair as if Tom threatened to strike her. Tom leaned toward her and with a quiet voice went on:

"Cornelia," he said, "Father is dead. The father we revolted from and left. Tell me, Sister, how have we improved upon him?"

There was a silence. There was calm, very deliberate in Tom. He was smoking a cigarette. He took the red-tipped toy and held it before his eyes and looked at it; he blew on

it with his half-parted lips. His lips were very hard against his teeth. The burning tip of the cigarette flared for an instant under the draught, burned more ash.

"Is not that the question which haunts us, Cornelia?"

She had no word for him. She felt he was unjust and cruel. She was helpless under his mood. Always in the past, she had been able—the sister, the mother in Cornelia—to veer him from himself and from herself when his mood went shattering. She had been wise and poised. Now she lay quivering with him, underneath his words.

"We don't talk very often, do we, of father and the past? I wonder why we avoided them. Were they not the scene of our great Victory? Where is our pride, Cornelia?" He was deliberate and slow: his irony stiff like a rod.

"Just think," he said, "what we left: what we overcame! Father! He is dead now. His remains—all of them, including Ruth and Laura—lie rotting on the Farm. We should be able to make some sort of estimate of what he was. . . ."

She wanted to stop him. She wanted to know. Tom was right. Let them make some estimate of what they were.

". . . a man whose blood had turned to poison. . . . Do you remember how he used to beat his daughters? The thing to remember in that is that he loved it. He had one successful daughter: Laura: she loved it also. And the world we lived in, Cornelia. Few children are brought up in so real a world. We alone had no illusions about America. We knew that in America, quite as elsewhere, only the few were to be saved. The rest were damned. We knew that the deeds of the masses were damned deeds here, quite as in Europe. Yes:—were there illusions about what he told us of the Revolutionary Fathers? or the Pioneers? We were wise children. And the reason was simply that Father taught us to see the truth. Have you ever thought of that? He taught us better than he, knew, himself. For Father saw

through the real world: he saw what a cold and lustful monster it all is. But he had his way of refuge. He had his God who had predestined him to heaven. Blessed Father! He had his revenge, for there was always the same God damning the irritating mob to hell. For his sake, Sister. . . . Do you see what I mean? Father gave us his knowledge for weighing facts, which means that he gave us his disillusion about Earth. But *we* did not stop there. We turned that same power against his own fairy-tales. God went, heaven went, hell went also. All that remained was the Earth that he had taken from us. . . ."

Tom was silent. He smoked measuredly. He went on:

"Father was a happy man: he had a place to go to, from this desecrated world. Father was a strong man: he had his God. Where is our God, Cornelia?"

He sprang up. His eyes flashed. Deep anger was with his hands above his head. He sank down once more, and dropped his cigarette.

"We have no gods," he said. "We have lost the old one. We have won no new ones."

He smiled with the same hard half-parted lips. "I am not sure that we were so very wise. All the searing and desecrating vision that Father gave us of this reality was mere preparation for his Faith. He and his kind helped desecrate the world in order to enjoy their heaven. Without his heaven, is this reality he gave us altogether truth? Where are we with it? What is an abortion in relation with a life that is fully born? We rebelled; we left him and his blows and his hell and his God. We took with us the corroding poison of his blood. Were we not fools, Cornelia?"

"But, Tom, what else could we have done?"

"Nothing, of course."

"Then, perhaps——"

"Be brave and honest, for once! A little more like father."

His souls in hell could also not have done otherwise. . . ."

"Tom! I won't believe . . ."

He cut her short. "Very well, then: what *will* you believe?"

She was silenced. His smile was over her, a hateful bitter triumph.

"That is it, precisely. Don't you see? What *will* we believe, Cornelia?"

He came and lifted her out of her chair. They sat down on the couch. His hand was very gentle on hers. He kissed her.

"We are neither the old nor the new, Sister. I sometimes think we are nothing. We are not happy. We are not strong. We have no gods at all."

"We are unhappy, Tom."

He looked at her fiercely.

"Are we that?" he asked her. "Have we the strength to be unhappy? To remain unhappy? Oh, how I wish I could believe that!"

He was grasping both her wrists. He dropped them.

"No," he said. "It's a lie. We are nothing. We are not even martyrs. I with my Law—my successful rotten Law. You with your paltry, remunerative Art! We are on the way. Something is on the way, through us, perhaps, through the wilderness of life. We are they who shall fall by the way-side."

He looked over his shoulder, out of the window. The night was a blue haze, deep and far. It was streaked with the murmur of men, with the glow of a million lights. A tremor ran through him like the pulse of blood, and came about them, seated in the room.

"Let us face that, Cornelia . . ."

"But Tom:—in what you said—that is faith of a sort. You



spoke of a wilderness to go through. Of a way. It must lead somewhere. There must be something else?"

"For us?"

"Perhaps not for us."

"I should like," Tom pondered, "to have some Church in which to perform a service for my father."

She looked at him close. His head was down. She took his face in her hands and touched his shut eyes with her lips.

"Dear Tom! Don't I help?"

There was a great hope in her. If she could find him again: hold him again! Tom, her first child. . . .

He was searching her with eyes her lips had opened.

Her thoughts ran on. Dimly she felt the peril in her thoughts, running along. . . . No, Tom was not her child. Tom, no longer. He was like her. It was true. Only, he would not accept. She knew the wilderness of life stretched mountainously far beyond where her feet could bring her. She knew the truth for her in what Tom had said. She had hoped, not for herself, but for him. She had hoped falsely. They were one—they were one. For there was another who was so infinitely more, that they were nothing.

And so her mind ran on, while Tom's eyes searched her. David was not maimed like them. In his eyes was the promise of a new God. And Tom was waging war against that promise. Talk as he would, understand as his mind made him, Tom waged war against that faith in David which he lacked. Strove to snatch it from him: steal it and wear it dead, rather than let David go on alone, with his eyes living.

She had said to him: "Do I not help?"

With an uncanny closeness, Tom sought in herself the answer.

Cornelia turned her eyes away. She could not look at her

brother. It was her brother whom she loved. Yet, turning away her eyes, she felt that she was leaving him by a wild wayside, to parch and perish. She felt that even so let it be. All of her must be girded beyond him.

He also had said no word. He went to the window and stood there looking out. She knew that both of them had understood. . . .

Twelve years before they had set out on a great enterprise together. They had come up from a common childhood which was a common suffering. They had reached Being together. Everything they had was a thing they had shared. The sere soil of the world was a single path they had traveled. Their hands had been joined. Now, facing each other over the communion of their years, they were prepared for war.

The bitterest of all was this: that it seemed natural. It was as if their common anguish, the hopes born of their hated home and the fruits they had wrung courageously from their adventure, pointed inevitably to this end. For the most natural of all was this: that the end also should be bitter.

The death of their father had brought Tom for the moment closer to Cornelia. He was coming again to see her. There had been months without a sign of him. She knew that when this mood wore out there would be months again. If she had questions of Tom, there was no time to lose.

It was bitter hard to bring herself to speak of David. She did not flinch:

"How does your friendship stand with him?" she asked him.

"It is stormy. It will always, I guess, be stormy. But it will always be."

They were at war, but they were generous to each other. Their war was a hidden and a sacred thing: it was not more

nor less than the confronting of themselves upon the path they had helped hew, had helped each other walk. It was a hidden thing, but they had no desire to conceal it. They were open to each other insofar as each could be. They were the brother and sister who had waged life and war together.

"Do you think it is helping David—this 'friendship' that will always be?"

"I have not your acute moral sense, Cornelia. How should I know?"

L She bit her lips.

F "Why," he asked with his ironic smile, "why don't you ask if it is helping me!"

L "You have made it plain to me, Tom, that you do not need my help. Out of self-protection I had to withdraw thinking too much of that."

L He nodded as if he understood and agreed. This hurt Cornelia. Even the words of contradiction would have been hostage to something precious.

L "David is growing masterful. That much I can say for our friendship. I told you how he turned Lunn and Durthal out of our place, one evening. What I did not tell you was this: the following day David was contrite. He wanted to apologize for the splendid thing he had done. I would not let him."

"Why?"

"What he did was himself. It is himself I care for. I will not let him be a renegade to his own instincts."

She laughed at him. It was an effort, turning her bitterness to laughter.

"In the contradiction, you simply had a higher sort of triumph. Don't you think I understand? You labor to beat him down and break him. When you see signs of your work

you turn about. When you get him beaten and broken at last, doubtless you will have no more use for him."

"Doubtless, Cornelia."

"Tom! Leave David alone!"

His cutting calm had parted her restraint. All of her fear threatened to burst out. She was close to Tom, beseeching. In a moment, her hands would be suppliant.

He let her plead.

"Do that for me, Tom. Leave him! Insult him! Turn him away!"

"I often try to. It's no use. I can sustain no mood long enough for that."

She was blinded by his words into a sense of hope.

"Oh, a little longer! Send him to me. He never comes to me, now. He will if you send him. I'll help you, Tom."

She stopped. She saw the folly of her outburst. Was there not war between them? He was there with his irony.

"What have you, really, against our friendship? There is something unreasonable in this. What is it? Of course, I shall send him to you. I promise that."

Never had she seen him so contained before her. He was winning. A flourish and a dare in his promise to send him. She pressed her lips with hands that had been almost suppliant before her brother. She would accept his ironic bounty: turn it against him. Many a battle was lost through excess of confidence. She could not answer his questions.

"You talk, positively, Sister, as if I were ruining the lad,—instead of slowly bringing him up."

"Bringing him up to what?"

"Well, to what? I ask you?"

"Tom, I cannot explain. There is something here I cannot explain. I want David to be free of you. That is all."

"So you can have him?—is that all?"

"You know that's a lie!"

She was breathing hard with her hurt.

He examined her. "Yes: that is a lie. That would be a reasonable reason. Too reasonable for you. I could respect that: even coöperate with it. If there were any chance of success." For an instant, he had tricked her into stirring toward him. She winced. "You can't expect me to crucify myself and David for your vague philanthropic folly."

"No, Tom—I cannot."

Then: "Tom, are you altogether frank with me? Do you really think my haunting fears are due to a selfish cause?"

"No, Cornelia."

"Do you think, Tom—answer me on your honor—do you think they are really vague and foolish?"

Waiting for his word, as he stood silent, she found that she wanted him so to think them.

His answer came: "No. They are not foolish. And only we are vague about them."

"Tom!" . . .

She must look out. She was so weak before him. She was ever so near to dangerous pleading. She straightened herself back.

"—but since *we* are so vague, Cornelia? Necessarily so. I call the whole discussion nonsense."

He was flippant over her tragedy: over her life. He was clear-eyed admitting it, and then he was flippant! He stood next to her with his light grace and she hated him. For he was the brother whom she loved.

He went and did not for a long time come back. He stayed away too long. But he wrote her a note:

*Dearest Sister:*

In accordance with my promise, I have urged David to go and see you. I scolded him for a thoughtless friend. He is

thoughtless, you know. I have found that out, many a time, to my unhappiness.

These books I am sending you I have just read this year and liked. I am sure you will like them also.

Lots of love, dearest Sister, and good fortune.

TOM.

How sure he was of David! How sure he was of her. She saw that he loved her in the same deep confident way of the younger brother whom she had nursed and led. The eternal way. She had unending hurt of this. For how could she deny the call of his love through his little note? And how could she answer it? She was torn. She knew there was now a reason for Tom's staying away. She wondered if Tom knew how he tore her. But if he had written her coldly, cruelly, would it have been less cruel? . . .

Cornelia found herself nursing in her arms a life that she must make to thrive against all hazards: the little life of a great resolve. She looked at it, and gave herself up to it. Dimly she knew that if she held it close enough, and warm, and endless against her breast, it would gain in strength.

David must be saved!

From now on, she went about with it. While she worked or played—seldom this was—and went through the grimacings of a social creature; while she slept—there it was ever upon her breast: that David must be saved!

He had not come to see her.

She said to herself: it is no matter. To have seen him would have been joy, or rather ecstasy so packed she could for many days have had her joy of it. It was no matter. For she had no plan. What would she say to him, or do, when he came? Let him stay away until she was more ready. It was bitter to know he had not come, and she expecting him. It was no matter.

Her sleep was a strange thing. No real dreams—streakings of thought and dream ran through her night like falling flames. So that her night was neither sleep nor waking. It was an endless trembling between two worlds, it was a part of Chaos. She lay there and her body was a restless weight holding her down. She was like a little boat tossed at anchor by a broken sea. Her body and her consciousness: these were the anchor. They kept her from running wild with the waves. And the waves kept her from being quiet at her anchor. She was torn. She was a continuous play of hindered movement.

When the day came, she lay there wearied as if she had been swept by a great fury.

Her nights were streaked by these running ribbons of dream: and always they were the same insofar as always they were really nothing. They were David. Her problems in David. Her plans and her helplessness to solve them. Never, even in her sleep, did she sink to some quiet haven of dream with David: have him there to talk to gently, to be with gladly. Something surging within her took this great Wish and cut it up into bloody fragments and strewed her night with them. All of David was never there: nor all of a single moment with her holding his head on her breast. David's laughter or David's troubled frown or David's voice: or merely David's name—David, David, David—falling down her night like drippings of blood. And she, lost in this welter of struggle between wish and the real, unable to take sides.

There was no rest in such nights. She lay in her narrow bed, cast up in her cell-like room as upon some rocky shore. And looking back upon her sleep, she had a sense of a delirious underworld, yellow of hue with veins of livid red wriggling athwart it, and of herself who followed the veins. It was a shattered and scattered self that had been thrown through the night, thrown, somehow intact, upon the shore of the morning.

Like a bruised woman, she was out of her bed. She placed the coffee on the gas-burner, and took a bath. Cornelia had no pleasure of her body. Unclothing herself, she did not care to look at her lean nakedness. It was as if she had feared to find great bruises upon it. She laid her gaunt hands on her breast and shivered, for it was cold and the water was none too hot which she had heated. She noticed how small were her breasts and that they had begun to droop. She remembered that once they had been beautiful and that she had been tempted to use them for a model; she had not dared, since then people would look on them. And after all, they were girl breasts, not those of a mother. Now they were neither. They were beginning to shrink and narrow and droop. They were becoming the breasts of a woman who had not lived. Yet, looking at them now, Cornelia felt no sorrow or regret. She took this fading as she took the world—the world outside her. She was outside herself. She did not care if her breasts were no longer beautiful. Who, indeed, had ever seen them? What good had she had of their beauty?

She stood before her dresser and put on her clothes. She dressed meticulously. There was no warmth in the care with which she braided her thin hair and knotted it into a Psyche back of her head. What was her hair to her? There was no warmth in her choice among her waists of the one she would wear that morning. She smoothed the loose ends under the belt and tidied the little linen collar. Her hands were fast at their work. They did not fail: also they did not linger.

Very neatly, Cornelia spread a napkin for a cloth on the table and placed down the tray and proceeded to eat her breakfast. She took a slice of bread and butter and an egg, and two strong cups of black coffee. She loved coffee. It was her one real vice. Lately she had needed it more than



ever. Night gave her no rest: and coffee weakened the pall of morning.

She cleared away her dishes.

There was her work before her and it was time to be working.

She looked at the little huddle of clay on the level of her head. She unwound the clinging cloth. She knew that she was bored. It was nothing but a huddle of dull clay. In it was lost somewhere the head of a boy. It was her task to find him, to bring him out, so she could go on when her model came. She found she did not care. The clay and the boy's head were remote. With all her effort, she could not bring them nearer. She looked at her work as if it had been the work of another person, very dim and weak, and very far away. She saw that it was hopelessly bad. She saw that Tom was right. He did not take her Art with any seriousness. That did not matter. Plenty of people did. She had won prizes. She was on Committees of Exhibition. Last year the Metropolitan Museum had bought her Dawn. But all of this was wrong. She did not care. She knew! She knew her Art was worthless. Because it bored her. It was a task. Ever since she had had time to give herself to it, it had not deceived her. Ever since she was an artist she had known she was no artist at all. David never spoke of her work. It meant nothing to him. He said he did not understand such matters. Nonsense! She remembered his childish outburst of joy at a Chinese vase they had seen one day in a shop-window on Fifth Avenue. What did he know of Chinese vases? Yet he had loved it. Had he once captured such a moment from her casts, it had perhaps been different.

How strange it all was, what an ironic time of it the world was having with its men and women! She had yearned to escape in order to be an artist. She had left home, risked life. She and Tom slaved, at one time nearly starved, while

she pursued her dream. Here she was: Cornelia Rennard, Sculptress. And ashes in her hand. But what was more than strange: she did not seem to care. It all seemed natural enough. Like a tale whose end she knew and whose telling bored her.

Tom was right. . . .

She found she had unconsciously redraped the wet rag around her model. She thought of David. The resolve: the resolve! How dimly she reacted to life this morning! Not alone this morning. She had never thought even of looking out of the window. Look! it was snowing. She leaned against the window-seat. The snow came swirling, merry, through blue air. There was little wind. The street was muffled and passive: strangely quiet street under the merry snow.

David might have come. Did he hate her? she wondered. She was importunate, cloying perhaps. Young blood hates such a woman. Almost she blamed herself for the fact that her nights were streaked with yearning for him.

"But he does not know. He does not know. I have not bothered him *really*. . . ." She pleaded with him. Let her have at least her nights of broken dreams, her days broken with worry.

She had definitely given up her modeling for the day, she had a sense of relief.

"Giulio does not seem to be coming at any rate," she excused herself. She went on: "If he comes, I'll pay him and send him off."

Why should she worry about work? She had plenty of money. She had enough left over from last year to take her through two seasons. She spent so little.

Her relief widened and deepened. It was as if she had found for herself a holiday. Let her be alone with her reveries and her anguish. Let her vegetate, if she would, or die. Let her art die, at any rate. Who cared?

As she went musing about, she hummed a broken aria, from Tristan. Very broken since all now that came from her was broken, and since, besides, she had no ear for music. But often she went to the Opera—away upstairs—and listened to the cloudy and clotted passions of Richard Wagner.

Almost unknown to herself she had taken a pile of paper and all the paraphernalia of water-color from a drawer; set it out on the table. There it was! She looked at it and smiled.

"Oh, you lazy one," she said half aloud, "what an escape from your real work! What nonsense!" Under her hand was a set of sheets she had already daubed. A new foible, this: which she never more than half allowed. There was much of her father in Cornelia. Her sculpture she admitted: it was work. These blind, wandering daubs were play—were some sort of dissipation—were nonsense and wicked.

This morning Cornelia was indulging herself. Giulio had not come. Let her be wicked. It was no worse to be wicked than to be a wearied artist. So she spread out her daubs of water-color and examined them. And they were unlike the model of clay in this, that they seemed near her; she let her eyes and her mind wander among them and they were very near herself.

She grasped a brush and wet it and sat down. Something dim came over her eyes. It was as if they turned inward. Cornelia relaxed. Her breathing came more like the natural ebb and flow of a tide within her. Her head and neck fell easily forward. She had the sentiment of having returned, sweetly and without effort, to her night. It was like the coming to a loved trysting place. She was once more with her sleep, streaked in shreds of dream. Her brush made strokes on paper. . . .

| Suddenly, whatever this was she painted was done. For she stopped. She left her night-world. She held out the

sheet at arm's length and tried to look critically at what she had committed: she tried to laugh. It was a very mad and incomprehensible design. It was nonsense. But she could not laugh at it. The colors *were* somehow lovely. Of course, color was not everything.

All the little paintings were different, yet each of them in some mysterious way was a record of her broken nights. Each of them had come to being while her mind returned to some dim hinterland, and found her nights, and brought them back. Swathes of color passionate against a brooding background; spirals of flame in space: parabolas of red and gold and green dragging a fever across darkling worlds of black and gray. In all of them was a phantasmagoria of design Cornelia had no name for: but could not wholly reject. They were herself. The diary of her passionate anguish. No one would ever see them. Whom did they hurt? She had joyous rest in looking at them, in letting herself out among their distances. She promised herself that she would always laugh at them: when she felt a little stronger and her fight was won, she promised herself to leave them and return to her Art.

A thought came sudden from the outer world.

"Why," she cried, standing up, "it's Thanksgiving Day! No wonder Giulio did not come."

She put away the sheets of her confessional.

"I must have a walk. Goodness! I nearly forgot. People are coming to tea!"

She had marketing to do. The stores would still be open in the morning. She trudged through the bright pink snow: she said to herself:

"I wonder if I am mad making these mad pictures. They *are* mad. They have no subjects or anything. Well, I don't care. Supposing I *am* mad? . . ."

The pink snow danced lazy through blue air. The City

was a great beast snoring with snout on the ground. She pondered.

"It sometimes seems to me things are not really half so clear and concise as we artists make them. I wonder if we would be more concise painting these misty moods. . . ." She saw how fluent and filmy a thing was the snowing City. People passing were strokes of smudge across the snow.

"They aren't really like people at all—noses and limbs and thoughts!"

But she was at her shop. She was buying chocolate éclairs: very clear things, these, with particular prices. Her inspiration melted in the sticky air. Cornelia had no fingers to grasp these luminous moments fleeting across her.

As she came back a little cavalcade of ragamuffins pranced and begged pennies. She gave each of them five cents. They danced and cavorted in the snow. Their faces were running with grease and paint. The boys wore women's skirts tucked high under their armpits, feathers in vast broken derbies abandoned by their fathers. The girls were trim in trousers: their little buttocks pointed rakishly back under their flowing curls.

"How like flowers they are, in the snow," said Cornelia to herself. "And the great monster City with his snout snoring away. They'll tickle him with their antics: he'll shake himself and snarl and swallow them up."

The mood was thinning. Once more she was thinking of David and of the tea that was to be a torture. What did she want of friends? What did she have to give them? How, with no work and no joy in her heart, was she ever to pass through the countless hours of life? . . .

A doctor would have said to Cornelia: "The trouble with you is, you do not eat enough."

Thus this day, when Cornelia was once more in her room,

she was too tired to go out again to dine, too bored to cook a dinner for herself.

"I'll eat at tea," she explained to her sense of unfitness. She brewed herself a cup of coffee. That was easy.

She recalled her last Thanksgiving. She and Tom went together to the New Jersey heights above the Hudson River; they dined at a mushroom farm. What a jolly jaunt—only a year ago! The last, she thought, of her excursions with Tom. A silent rule they had had always to spend their holidays together—a rule unbroken for twelve years, broken now by the war between them that broke all things.

She sat sipping her coffee, and wandered over the frozen hills where their feet had struck. They pitied David laughingly, that day. As so often on set occasions, he had been gobbled up by the Deanes. The conventional time, they found, for not counting on David was the conventional feast-day. She remembered what Tom said: "These families have so little imagination! They cannot even invite a chap to dinner except on a public holiday."

Cornelia thought now how good it would be to be embraced in some convention: however stiff it was it would be warm to be shut in tight. She had been alone the Christmas of last year. She was not used to it. Christmas was coming again.

She made herself a little mound of cushions on her couch and settled with a book. It was a silly novel some one had given her. There, uncut, was the package of books in the corner, which Tom had sent. Something kept her away from them. She was not sure what shafts Tom might thus unsheath and aim at her. She was not suspicious but indifferent. Her mind was torpid. They must be heavy books. She would have to work to understand them.

The novel, on the contrary, did not make demands enough. It was the story of a Belle of Philadelphia, loyal to the Revolution during the British Occupation. It was very plain that

the lovely American was to win valuable secrets of war from the vicious British officer who loved her: would give them after hazardous adventure to Washington's aide-de-camp who was her true love and so help win the war. Sure enough, there she was galloping the dangerous country to Valley Forge. Cornelia's mind wandered as she idly turned pages. She put down the book. Her mind was a weary woman stumbling with dead feet across the snow. She ached. The snow had stopped. A gentle pall came in from the muffled world. The elevated trains were a memory, life stirred like a larval city hidden from her eyes. She lay in a blue night, and the name of David fell across her night in livid snow. The name of David and the eyes of David and the thoughts of him, cutting her face and melting. Cornelia was on horseback, although she could not see her horse; she was hurrying to Valley Forge with an important secret. Her horse stumbled: he was forever turning, forever turning back. He was trying to carry her into the snare of the British officer. The officer was a short, slim man, he was Tom. Cornelia was lifted up. Her eyes seemed to peer through a viscous film and part it. She lay there prostrate, now, and conscious, neither asleep nor awake; she felt the weariness within her body and the great strain of how she lay, like a wrack upon her. She was tired, tired! Could she not sleep? Could she not have rest? Let her but stretch out and relax and fall away, deeper down where the hectic grays were black.

She remained as she was. She felt that she was tied in a hard knot. She was caught in the vice of her nerves. She could not swing herself free: she could not hold herself fast. She lay there and suffered. Though she was half asleep, she could feel her energy fall away in her strain, and her thoughts bound and strike her like iron balls.

When it was time, she got up and prepared the tea things.

The day was low and away. Where had it gone? It seemed

to have left her behind. She had the haunted instinct of having been abandoned. Looking back on the day, it seemed a vivid thing, swift and heavy with laughter and paint-smudged children: it had rolled over her body and left her behind. She was bruised by its passage. Day of Thanksgiving! . . . And here about her now, where the Day had been, a void gray like her sleep: within it just such scant scatter of life—herself.

Each little thing that stirred—a teacup against a saucer, the tick of the clock—had a thousand jagged echoes.

The bell rang. It jangled against her nerves.

Cornelia gripped herself. She had a sense of her head careening.

The door opened. She went forward and smiled.

A stately woman with a gentle face came in, behind her a little dapper man. She kissed Cornelia. Seeing Cornelia she stood on the threshold of some passionate understanding. But her husband broke the warming silence. He ran about the room and chattered. He was very gay. Cornelia smiled wanly at him.

It was Sylvain Purze, maker of fashionable portraits: and his wife, maker of Sylvain Purze.

They sat, the two women sheathed themselves up, so the little man should not be hurt with any truths. Mrs. Purze was a woman bathed in a sweet melancholy. Her fine features were a little vague under the dawn of her gold hair.

"What a jolly place you have here, you know, Miss Renard!" exclaimed Mr. Purze. "How I envy you your simplicity. Ah, me!" He sighed, thinking with satisfaction of his luxurious studio on Gramercy Park. "When you're married——" he intimated treacherously. But his wife did not mind. She knew Cornelia's opinion of her husband's talk. She knew her own. The trouble was precisely that her husband had never given her the excuse to leave him.



Cornelia's mind was a twilight swept clear of the mists of the sun. Each nerve stood out alone, and took its toll of its surroundings. The bell jangled again.

A young girl came in, diffident, spring-like; before a tall dark man with head thrust stiffly back, so that he seemed to be leaning in the direction contrary to his coming.

Cornelia greeted her with real pleasure. Cornelia's sudden brightness was like a pitiful flower budding above strewn ashes.

"Helen! I am so glad you thought of coming. And this is Doctor Westerling?" She shook his hand silently. "I have heard of you." She was not interested really. She introduced them.

"Miss Helen Daindrie. . . ."

She had expected the Purzes only. No one else would come. The little party caught from the hostess the sense of its completion. It threw out its arms and wove a comfortable net about itself. It settled down.

The talk ran easy and subdued: a sluggish circulation within this temporary creature. Mr. Purze was suave with words. His wife had a poise that cradled all the room and gave the creature rest. Dr. Westerling was taciturn: but he was intense in listening. He was a pleasure to Mr. Purze. And Helen Daindrie sat there sweetly, neither talkative nor silent. Cornelia had no need to exert herself. The party would be an easy one. It would live and come to a good end. She found herself looking more and more at Miss Daindrie, drawn to her by a fascination bitter-sweet. She wondered why. She asked her senses. They were clear in their reports like bells.

She was a little woman—half girl, not more than twenty-two. She was rather plump, but gently so and with grace. It was a quality, invisible like perfume, that came from her. Under her prettiness a sturdy note. She must be capable.

Her eyes were a light blue: Cornelia saw them in the candles she had lighted: but her mouth was straight, long, even, and her chin had strength in its womanly rondure. Looking at her, Cornelia felt the great good health of this woman.

Her career told something, but what Cornelia's sharpened nerves now gave her told more in an instant. Miss Daindrie was a college graduate, and a student in medicine. She was going to employ her science not in practice but in expert work among the children and mothers of the City. This sounded serious almost to forbidding. But the girl, sitting quiet and drinking her tea with a sober head, as if this were a meal, not a convention, was different from her work. She was at once lovely with youth and indestructibly firm with a quaint mother-sense. Her stalwartness was about her girlhood, protecting it, as her strong full body was about the dance of her eyes.

Cornelia mused away. . . . She need not worry about her guests. Mr. Purze had aroused Doctor Westerling to talk. He was saying serious things about the advance of Science in America, as compared to Europe. He had spent four years in Paris, Vienna, Berlin. It was plain he knew. Whatever he said he knew. He had taken up Mr. Purze's challenge, "We are children in art," as one would take up a problem to be answered.

"In America," he said, "our art is Science."

Cornelia watched him detachedly. He was talking really to impress Miss Daindrie. There was a caress in his voice as he said Science. What did it mean to him, that had a body and soul? He loved Miss Daindrie.

Did she love him? No. Would she? Cornelia leaned back in her chair.

For the first time, she noticed the tilt of Miss Daindrie's head on her lovely neck: the whimsical curve of the cheek-bone and the clear, almost protrusive outline of the jaw.

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There must be something Irish about her. Her father—Judson Daindrie—he was Scotch. . . . Doubtless her mother. Also there was something romantic. A pinch of romance, like a pinch of explosive powder. She was steady: her thrust in life was sure and long. This was one reason why the assertive and uncertain Doctor loved her. But in order to set her off, that pinch of powder. Did the Jewish scholar, exact and intransigent, hold the needed spark? Cornelia thought not. How those blue eyes could gleam! Could they gleam for him? Of course, she pondered, she might marry him, unlighted. He must have a pounding, indefatigable way. Look at him driving his point into Mr. Purze who was really not so very concerned. Yes: she might marry him. If no one else touched off the powder. If she remained unaware of it. She might go unmellowed through life, unfertilized. Such things happened. It would be a pity. . . .

The talk was animated now. The party bloomed to its fullest life. Miss Daindrie was curiously self-conscious about Dr. Westerling's oration. She was teasing him. How steady she was, for one with a perfume so diffident and sweet! He did not like her jests. His mind sensed only dully what they meant: sharply what she meant behind them. For some reason, a rebuke. He bore it. He was used to battle, and to resistance. He was used to rebukes. But he was uneasy. The cruder lists of argument and quarrel were more to his measure. It seemed to him that this Mr. Purze, if he was an artist, needed a lot of informing.

"We *have* here a tendency," he found the need of explaining his debate to Miss Daindrie, "—to misjudge America by overlooking what America excels in, and wishing in our hearts she were merely another Europe."

Mr. Purze was suddenly agreeing. He saved the Doctor from another teasing. He was nothing, if not a soother of self-important people. He was marvelously informed in the

prerequisites of his art of portraiture. He knew who Westerling was. Not rich, but already an emerging figure at the great Magnum Institute. Great men sat for portraits.

Westerling discoursed on the need of a new critical scientific standard in Art. Did not Mr. Purze agree? Oh, indeed. It was nonsense, was it not? to say that values in beauty could not be determined like any other element in a material solution. Painting was a chemical solution. Music and poetry were physical solutions: sound waves illustrative of certain documentary matter which of course was open to intellectual appraisal. . . . He was very interested in that.

"I was invited sometime ago to a private recital of Lahlberg. You know—that Russian pianist. He played many of his own compositions. I asked him to state to me in scientific terms what his music meant: why, for instance, he used seconds and sevenths where Chopin employed thirds and fifths. He was quite dumb, I assure you. I needed no further proof of what I had already expected——" the Doctor had meant to say "suspected"—: "the man is a clever charlatan."

"But he plays so beautifully," pleaded Mrs. Purze.

"We cannot trust uneducated senses any more than we can uneducated people."

"No," decided Cornelia in herself, "this is not what she wants."

She had been watching Helen Daindrie with a growing singleness of interest. She saw how the girl's body faintly stiffened when the Doctor spoke. She was aware of the implied direction, of the source of the heat of his words: she was attentive, she was respectful and impressed. And yet, Cornelia felt a specific turning away in the young girl's mind, a wavering of interest, almost a recoil and a revolt from this intellectual tribute. He did not really hold her. When she wandered, Cornelia saw her relax. Now, during these last



long words, suddenly Miss Daindrie turned and met Cornelia's eyes. In them a twinkle of disdain, a gladness to be looking away.

"Have you heard Lahlberg?" Cornelia asked her. Dr. Westerling still talked.

"Yes."

"Do you care for him?"

"I think he is very wonderful," said Miss Daindrie. In her remark there was specific rebellion against what Dr. Westerling was saying. Cornelia noticed. It proved to her that there was danger after all of the Doctor's winning. . . .

Suddenly, she said to herself: "*Why do I care?*"

She had been watching Miss Daindrie. Now, for the first time, she watched herself to know why she was watching.

As she went groping, she understood.

For a long time she had walked through a dark cave with a lantern, placing it against the dripping walls, seeking a certain thing. . . . Sudden, there was her lantern against it, what she sought!—and she recoiled, she withdrew her light, she did not want to see. . . . With her body strained and her nerves singing against the pull of her will, she lifted her light again, she forced herself to look.

She felt it . . . in her heart she could have no doubt of it. . . . Helen Daindrie was meant to make the rescue of David!

How clear it was, terribly clear. The one way! She wondered by what painful blessing she had not seen before. She knew that she had seen and had not wanted to see it. It was too bitter, too cruel. Unfair! How could she stand this, who was willing to bear all things? This giving David into the arms of another woman? How could she be sure? How dared she? Reasons had tumbled upon her: knowing was blotted out. Now, what had been dim was clear: what had been so hard, seemed strangely natural and easy.

She looked at Helen. She felt her presence. Never had she so felt a life before. Helen was lovely and girlish and strong. She would lead David the way of his dreams, the way of his young gods—they must be her gods also! She would lead him firmly. Her sense of right was clear like her blue eyes. Feeling her there, Cornelia loved Helen Daindrie. Her heart went out to her, her hands pleaded to embrace her. She seemed to hold her face in her trembling hands and to look deep in Helen. Yes: she was lovely, for she was to be the beloved. She was sacred, for it was she who was chosen.

Tom's hold would fall away when once David turned and wanted to move toward Helen.

"Bless you!" her eyes said, "God bless you. And do as I want. And love him as he deserves."

How very certain it all seemed to Cornelia! There sat Helen Daindrie, talking, smiling, frowning a little perhaps, and nothing had been said. Nothing had happened. Yet Cornelia was sure that this girl would win David's love, and win him from Tom and save him. . . . Win him forever from herself.

So let it be. There was no bitterness in her heart. No hurt, it seemed. For all of her was the fullness of her hurt. Her hurt was about her, surrounding her like air. Without it, she must have stifled.

She wanted to get up and take Helen's hand and kiss it. She was her David, looking at this woman. She wanted to kiss Helen's eyes and tell them what it was they would soon see. She forgot the Doctor. She no longer saw him. So sure she was.

She sat there, full of her vision. "Nothing has happened. They need never meet—unless you force it," was a faint whisper she had no ears for. She must go on in this greater ecstasy than she had ever known. She must make her vision live. Who was she—Cornelia, or David? or was she this sweet

fresh girl with the loyal eyes? A great faint ease moved through all her body, as if she were bleeding to death.

She had no words to say to Helen, nor to herself. She longed only to touch her hair, kiss her eyes. David was to touch and to kiss them! Her nerves, that had been taut and clear in the drunkenness of fasting, slumbered now as if they had feasted. Her eyes were dim and saw no further thing. She was indeed swathed warm and happy, like one bleeding away and bathed in her own blood.

But nothing happened. She had no further sense of the room save that it held her up: nor of the easy talk save that her knowledge of it let her float slumberously, in the sea of her blood.

All her blood was outside her. It was no longer a beating surge within the pent walls of her soul. She was emptied of desire and of pain.

She felt that something was to happen: there would come some proof to her vision. She would look upon it sweetly as upon her death.

She awaited her death. She was smiling.

The bell rang. The door opened. David came in. . . .



#### XIV

**D**AVID had long intended to see Cornelia. Tom reminded him more than once: reminded him perhaps a bit too often. There was a stubborn touch in David. Something within him seemed to resist his going, and even he knew moodily that the something was kin to Tom's insistence. He had a way of sallying forth on a Sunday afternoon, resolved to walk an hour and then go to her place: and of forgetting. Until it was too late. He would say: "Next time I will not forget." At last the "next time" came to be Thanksgiving.

He dined with the Deanes. He had no plans at all for after dinner. The dinner would be big, he lazy. If his uncle offered him a cigar and Lois was amiable, he might sit around all afternoon. He did not much care. But his uncle had his erratic ways: in and out of business, one never could tell about him. Doubtless the moody angles of Lois were due to her father. Sometimes he would treat him as a man:

"Have a cigar, sir?" David accepted and liked this. Moreover the effect of a cigar was always to make him heavy and sleepy: unfit either for walking or a visit: in no heroic mood for visiting a friend toward whom his sense of guilt made him uncomfortable.

Then again, his uncle would light his own cigar and forget him; perhaps even say:

"Well, children, I am going to take a nap. . . . Run along." He napped on the dining-room sofa.

This happened on Thanksgiving.

Lois was somber. David knew that her engagement—it



had never been more than a casual trial—was broken. Once more she was in the open field. And more cynical, more difficult than ever. She had been spiteful, it seemed to David, on this Feast of Thanksgiving. For the first time in a rare long stretch, he had almost preferred the flinty steadiness of her sister. Lois had nothing to say to him, to do with him. When she spoke, she managed an air of objective and disdainful interest that was worse than indifference. As if she were thinking: "What can this specimen possibly have to say?" After dinner, she struck out her hand and smiled formally into his face:

"Good-by, David: I have a date and it's late. Can I drop you somewhere?"

He spurned her offer. He found himself out of the house, it was still snowing. He had a sentimental turn over the snow and his loneliness, his being turned out lonely into the snow.

He began to trudge and to enjoy the walk. He had had no cigar. He was clear-headed. The snow ceased, the air of the darkling City was soft like the touch of silk. He trudged for several hours. Five blocks from her house, the summons came to Cornelia.

He hated the Deanes that afternoon. It was an old track in his brain that led him now from them to Cornelia, as his old revolts had led him three years before. True, Mrs. Deane had said to him: "You can stay, dear, if you want and entertain *me*." True, the thought came that this might have been more comfortable after all. He did not want to go home. Tom had a way of wreathing their room in smoke and cynical smiles on holidays. It was plain that the time had come to go as his feet now took him. . . .

At the tea, nothing visible had occurred. Cornelia was behind her guests. Far away: pleasantly so, since if she held a rebuke for him it was far away also. There had been a



girl with a sweet voice. He did not recall her face. He had come late, left early.

Now a note from Cornelia. She had scarcely seen him on Thanksgiving. She wanted to see him. Would he come the following Sunday to tea?

He was there, she was not alone. This was rather strange, thought David. Evidently she was not so anxious after all to see him really. He had exaggerated her feeling. Doubtless she did not care enough to have a rebuke for him. At least he could not detect it. It was a pleasant afternoon. With Cornelia was a girl—"my dear friend," she called her—Miss Helen Daindrie. A very sweet girl, thought David. Rather distant.

"You funny person!" she said to him. "Why didn't you offer to take Miss Daindrie home?"

"I thought I'd like to see you alone, for a minute."

"Nonsense! You know you'd have preferred escorting her."

"Well—is it right—at a casual tea—the first time you meet a person?"

"The first time! Why, David! You met Miss Daindrie on Thanksgiving."

"Oh, did I?"

She was looking at him with a cloudy reserve on her eyes he could not understand. Why should she be offended, if he did not remember Miss Daindrie? Did Cornelia love her so much?

"Now, run along." She almost put him out.

He thought her strangely cavalier and distant. He enjoyed her. For the first time, in long, he did not find Cornelia cloying. There had been none of the warm discomfort.

He was glad to come again. He was glad, now, in his supine state, when he was lifted in any way from his comfortless closeness with Tom.

It was a little party. Cornelia entertained quite often. She had always said, in the old days: "David, I do not invite you. What should you do with all these stupid people?—stupid and self-important. When I see you, David dear, I want *you*."

Now, how different was Cornelia, how light and easy to get on with! David began to question, should he really want to see her alone, could he succeed? He came to just such a party of self-important people, nondescripts of whom he had met none before, with their endless chatter about remote, allusive topics, and wished to see none ever again. It was almost like meeting an old friend to find Miss Daindrie there. He reckoned that she and Cornelia must be fast friends. She was strange. Each time he met her she seemed to him so different he could not be sure he had met her before. He talked with her a great deal that evening.

Cornelia said: "There is only one person here you could possibly be interested in. Don't mind being selfish, dear. Devote yourself to *her*. I'll manage the others."

He did. He scarcely spoke with Cornelia.

A pause of several ordinary weeks: a visit to the Magnum Instituté.

"Would you like to see the great laboratories and the hospital?" Cornelia wrote him. "Doctor Westerling said I might come, and bring a friend."

David escorted her. They went through a long, high room, cold and metallic and full of corrosive odors. It was painful to David. He felt that he was being cut by a very sharp steel blade, so that there was no pain, and yet it was painful. Miss Daindrie was there in a white apron and a white stiff blouse. It seemed to David that the hard starched linen must cut into her softness. His teeth were a bit on edge, and he was afraid to look too close at the acids and the test-tubes full of evil germs and the smears of blood. The Doctor ex-



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plained a culture of gelatine in which grew billions of organisms and over which Miss Daindrie pored as over a cradle. This brought nausea to David. He knew he was silly. "I would not want to be a doctor," he whispered to Cornelia. He saw that she too was in pain in this chill temple of science.

What held him most was that Miss Daindrie had no eyes for him at all. She followed the white-aproned Doctor in rapt submission. And Doctor Westerling, David was sure, did not like him. He looked quizzically at David's wandering attention.

He said to him: "You are not interested, I guess, in medicine—except when you have a stomach-ache?"

"No," David answered seriously. "Isn't that the one time when I should be interested?"

For a moment Doctor Westerling appeared to like him. His eyes widened, took David in as if with the help of a new light. He began nodding. "Why! You are right." He laughed. Miss Daindrie came up.

"What contribution *did* you make, Mr. Markand, to medical science?"

David was sure the Doctor stopped liking him at once.

Their meetings were casual but they were not infrequent. Miss Daindrie, he thought, must be a remarkable woman. For she was always affable to him; and always knew what he had said last time. Yet, her mind must be replete with significant affairs. How could he doubt through it all her strict inaccessibility?

One day, she said to him: "Why don't you come and see me some evening, Mr. Markand?"—and laughed.

"Why do you laugh?"

"I almost feel you have vowed you would never ask of your own accord."

She was full of assurance, and of a sweet timidity. It

seemed to David she was so high above him she could follow whatever whim she wanted and lose not one jot of her status. Such a whim, doubtless, was this.

"Oh, I should love to come. . . . I didn't—I didn't rely——" he stopped. "Do you really want me to come, Miss Daindrie?"

She saw that he was serious. "Why should I ask you?"

That was convincing. "I don't see," he said, "what you could possibly find of interest in me."

It was the beginning of the impulse he was always to have with her to speak out his mind.

She answered him seriously too.

"I want to find out, perhaps," she said.

They were in a box at a theater. It was a special matinee of a comedy by Bernard Shaw: a strange new genius out of Ireland. Cornelia and Miss Daindrie had arranged the party.

"Shaw deserves to be supported," Cornelia explained; even Tom had been willing to come.

She heard every word that passed between David and Miss Daindrie. Her neighbor in the Box was a young man she had never met before. He found her strangely distracted between the curtains. He said to her: "But after all, Miss Rennard, what are we to think of this man Shaw?" She answered, vigorously nodding: "Yes, indeed." David was going to call? What a stubborn child he had been! A guess, deeply. She believed she could see. Unknown to himself, he was struggling against Helen. He had an assured comradeful way with women—the way of a boy: it was good. A visit to a girl might mean nothing. After these resistance and the silence behind their questionings as they looked at each other, he might well ask why she wanted him to come. It was a bit disconcerting for the young man beside Cornelia.

When she was back in her room, Cornelia threw herself on her couch and cried. What a great Victory she had won!



David went about, filled with a new humility, a growing hatred of himself.

Nearly two years it was since he had seen in a street-car a small girl, and walked through a world suddenly shriveled. What after that? He too had shrunken and grown like the world, so that once more the world seemed right for him. Now another change. The world was gone altogether. None of its tortured standards near him any more to measure him and call what he was good. He stood naked in a sort of psychic space: he saw how soft, how idle, how small was his soul. It came to David how he hated himself, and how he was so full of this defeat upon him, that he could love no person and could have kind thoughts nowhere. All his senses were caught up in this tangle of himself. He felt he must grow far beyond the lowness where he now stood, to look with free eyes again upon another.

Tom was there, however. Tom was a part of himself—a part, then, of that he must detest. David called on Miss Daindrie. He went there and was silent. It seemed a place, wide like clear air, where he could look on himself. He had no sense of her.

He said to her: "Why do you ask me to come again? I am not amusing: I have nothing to give you."

And she: "Come next week. . . . What night, next week, can you come?"

He did not understand.

But he was at a pass where even this element of not understanding could not much hold him. He was not interested in Miss Daindrie. He was rapt in a hateful inner spectacle. What he needed was calm and clarity and strength to look at himself. This he found, sitting in the room with her, and her few words glowing steadfast over his eyes like candles. So he came.

She invited him to dine.

When he entered the drawing-room he felt he was late; they were waiting for him. Doctor Westerling was there. A slight small man with a limp stepped forward from his chair and as David took his hand he liked him. Mr. Judson Daindrie. Mrs. Daindrie had a cordial smile. It was all strange to David—this warmth, this kindness. He could not understand it. He felt a cloud over the face of Conrad Westerling and the Doctor's will dispersing it till it was gone. The struggle and stress of this he thought he could better understand. Mrs. Daindrie was saying to him:

"Won't you take Helen down, Mr. Markand?"

And there was Westerling offering the precedence through the door to a Miss Sophie Laurence who seemed very headstrong and stupid. All of these pretty ways were disconcerting since they hid something, David felt, and he knew not what.

He became part of the round table. Feeling himself a part and feeling Mrs. Daindrie at his left smile and be warm to him. David was eager to move himself away, just so he could try to see that he was part of this bright round table.

Miss Daindrie smiled at him, as at an accomplice.

"These are my family," she seemed to tell him.

He was at ease. He was unafraid of silence. So was Mrs. Daindrie. He said to himself: "I am sitting here quite silent, just like Miss Daindrie."

"Well, Mr. Markand? I understand you are musical. Can you play the piano?" asked Mrs. Daindrie. Quite abruptly she put her inapposite questions.

"Do have some more of the fish!"

"I imagine you feel quite like a New Yorker."

She left him alone. All of them left him alone. He was left of them all.

They tightened into a unit—they became a family—they discussed some family event or listened with a sort of myopic understanding to unleavened words from Miss Laurence who



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they seemed fond of, as one is fond of one's own foibles. In these gusts of attention away from him, David was comfortable. It seemed to him that Doctor Westerling was not.

There was a fragility about Mr. Daindrie. The skin was translucent and tight under the upstanding wave of his gray hair: the blue eyes were far in from the white tufts of his brow. His hands were very small. Even sitting there and taking the plate from the maid and thanking her, and listening with respect to the prattle of Miss Laurence, David felt that he was a little man who limped. Intelligent. Why did he have the sense of conflict between his intelligence and his gentility; the sense of his head bowing?

In another way Mrs. Daindrie was slight. She had a freckled smile and the puffs of her brown hair blew out the laughter of eyes. She was satisfied, it seemed to David, with the perpetual courtliness of her husband. Against their mood he felt Doctor Westerling veering stiffly. He wondered if this was why he felt this grain of resistance in them all against the doctor.

"Why, then, do they have him to dinner?"

"But why do they have me?"

He was a stranger, more so than Conrad Westerling. Yet, he was taking the soft patter of Miss Laurence less to heart. Could this possibly be of importance?

The door had opened.

"Come in, Hope." Her mother spied her. "You may say good-night."

A little girl stepped carefully through shadows that lay from the door to the bright table under its hood of electric lights. She dashed swiftly to her father and jumped into his lap. She hid her face.

"I said you might come in, Hope, to say good-night."

Hope faced about and smiled with a mischievous triumph.



She had had at least this moment from her mother's precept. Her father placed her firmly on her feet.

"This is my youngest," Mrs. Daindrie explained to David. "I believe you have never seen her. Hope dear, don't you want to say good evening to Mr. Markand?"

"Why am I so little surprised?" said David to himself. What was there growingly strange in this quiet night? "Does she remember me?" He felt the hollowness of nervous strain, as the little girl of the car came up to him, held out her hand.

"I know you already," she announced quite clear and high.

"Oh, do you?" said Mrs. Daindrie.

"I know you also," David spoke to Hope.

Their words caused no great interest. Doubtless, on one of the occasions when he had been there before they had met. In the lack of concern the two felt protection.

She took his hand, he looked into her eyes.

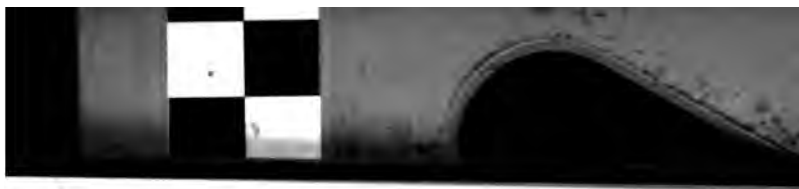
They were not quite so dimpled.

She tossed her head and withdrew her hand and left him.

David watched her giving the same hand to Doctor Westering, watched her embrace her sister with a burst of fondness, watched her recoil from the clumsy hug of Miss Laurence. He tried to believe that what she had given to him was secret and different.

She was gone.

He felt at home in this strange house. He felt intimate deeply with this little girl, whom he had watched for a moment out of their wide lives in a public car. He accepted her in this house as he accepted physical laws of life. Miss Daindrie had ears where they should be and they heard what they should hear when he spoke words to her. So this warm home had the little girl whom he loved, had his comfort. He did not fathom how now his love for Hope was a quieter thing. He accepted—didn't we?—miracle. So he thought. He had looked on the girl of the car with less intimacy after all.



Intimacy was the denier of quiet? Words were the denier of knowing? Was he comfortable, intimate, what was he here in this relevant night? She led out of the room where he sat embraced with Miss Daindrie. Did she lead forth—him? Whither? Who was she after all?

Doctor Westerling had an uncomfortable smile or an abstract frown when he was quiet. Mrs. Daindrie remarked this. She found she could better leave David to himself. He did not mind. Wherever the talk was, and for whom, he listened pleasantly. She must pay attention to Doctor Westerling the more since she realized that her daughter did not seem to care if he was at ease or no. A strange unwonted character in Helen. There must be a reason for her willed indifference, at bottom flattering to the Doctor—he was there invited. Anything from Helen not properly pleasant was flattering. Mrs. Daindrie had respect for those who had the respect of her daughter.

She plied him with questions. She could not hold his interest. The words each of them called forth died out like a too short fuse. Mr. Daindrie looked about the table. He saw that Westerling was being bored by the questions of his wife. He took umbrage neither for her nor against him. He was a quiet man, accepting the world's clashes.

"I suppose you are only waiting, Doctor," he said, "to take up your practice as a specialist?"

"I never intend to practice," Westerling replied. There was an emphatic note in his voice that brought silence over the table.

Helen looked at him, proudly. She knew the integrity of his mind. She knew her father's would meet it and be pleased. Always she was saying to herself and to certain of her friends: "I have great respect for Doctor Westerling's mind."

"Oh?" questioned Mr. Daindrie.

"You see, sir," Westerling went on, smiling with a new satisfaction that showed how exclusively his satisfaction dwelt

in knowledge, in discussion, in release from the naked domain of emotion, "you see, when I graduated from Medical School eight years ago, and from the hospitals here and abroad, a strange revelation had come to me. I had lost faith absolutely in the practice of medicine."

Mr. Daindrie was a good listener; a stern one. He bowed his head judicially. Westerling talked exclusively to him. But loudly. So that his consciousness of other ears must have gone to the volume of his voice. Perhaps, it occurred to David, he was trying within this little cozy table to address the world.

"It was a problem to face, let me assure you. Like one who graduates into the Priesthood, perhaps, and finds he no longer believes in the Divinity of Christ. Harder, much harder, I suppose—since in medicine the régime of study is terrific."

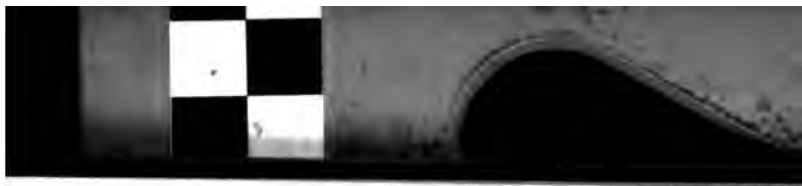
He said these words coldly. He seemed to avoid a tone which might bring sympathy, conviction. He had no eye for the faint shadow over Mrs. Daindrie's face, at his allusion to Christ.

"But how do you mean, you lost faith?" asked Mr. Daindrie.

"I had believed myself devoted to a science. I found that the present practice of medicine—the practice of medicine as it must be to-day in *lack* of science—is an empiric fraternal order."

Mrs. Daindrie gasped.

"I am convinced that most of the therapeutic practices which occupy so overwhelming a part of the work of the doctor must go. No; I don't know to be replaced by what. But the principle of introducing specific drugs into the system to right specific maladies, right wrongs—I know it is false. Some day most of our medical practice will be regarded as medieval, quite as we look on the humors and the cuppings of the Sixteenth Century leeches."



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"But there is nothing known to take the place of these medicines?"

"Nothing established."

"Then, until such time, must we not use what we have?"

"Doubtless we must, sir," Westerling spoke with a certain condescension. "But I cannot devote my life to the application of guess work and patch work which, I am convinced, is altogether based on erroneous premises."

"As sweeping as that . . . ?" Superlatives, absolutes, all tendencies toward violence brought out in Mr. Daindrie the deprecatory smile.

"Yes. The sole sound future of Medicine must rest on the discovery of principles beneath effects which we call physical and mental life; principles the pursuit of which will make the introduction of alien curative elements into our bodies simply absurd. I am referring not only to medicines but to vaccines, anti-toxins—surgical makeshifts. The true curative elements of life must be inherent in us. Somehow we have lost them. I am convinced the reason is that we have lost certain unconscious principles of behavior in which they are implicit. I am convinced that drugs are superstition."

"But bacilli—the trouble makers!" pleaded Mr. Daindrie.

"Harmless to the properly ordered organism. Immune to anything so isolated as the effect of drugs. We are subject to germ diseases, I am sure, because we are not masters of our independence of them. I am sure that some day it will seem as absurd to introduce drugs into our systems in order to kill bugs, as it would be now to say prayers in order to drive out devils."

"But the devils don't exist!"

"I'm not so sure of that. The instruments don't exist—as they do for bacilli—for seeing devils."

Mr. Daindrie was dazed by what seemed the man's veering from pure science to superstition.

"You're a bacteriologist!" exclaimed Miss Daindrie, sensing her father's state.

"I am working to find out what disordered conditions of our tissues and organs give the bacteria their chance—the pernicious ones. Or rather what conditions develop the pernicious ones, for that is essentially what our bodies have done. I am interested in nothing else."

Helen felt there was no answer: Doctor Westerling was interested in no answer. She kept silent.

"Well, we do need doctors," contributed Mrs. Daindrie. "Fortunately, not all doctors refuse to help the world, like you, Doctor Westerling."

A faint sneer crept over the young man's features. It covered a hurt. David alone saw the hurt. Mr. Daindrie answered the sneer.

"Yes," he said, "we must get on with the drugs, while you have yet to prove we can get on without them."

"Don't you believe in any of our curative or preventive service?" asked Helen Daindrie.

"Honestly, it is all nonsense."

"All of it?" She was withdrawing. But Westerling had a truth and he must pursue it first.

"I am sure modern practice has done more harm than good. Operations clean up appendicitis. We know that. What we scarcely guess, is how many nervous systems, kinetic systems, circulatory systems are wrecked by successful operations."

"I had always thought the American surgeons were great scientists."

"They are great virtuosi," declared Westerling.

"Yes, but——"

"——virtuosi should practice on pianos."

He was very excited. He said no word of his own doubts. He said no word of his vast sacrifice which his unproved convictions had forced upon him. He could have become rich in the practice of medicine. No one knew this better than Con-



rad Westerling. No one more than this Jew of sensitive family and depleted means loved the luxury and the freedom of money. All his life he would labor at an insignificant salary because of the depth of his sense of service. A true poet of Science. But of all this he said no word. He could not. To one person he needed to say all this: the person he loved, to Helen. But until she said that she loved him, he could not even to her. The strategy of showing his better self, of gaining her allegiance to his cause in order to help win her, was beyond him. Speaking stridently and harshly now, it was his need of tenderness and his deep respect for the tenderness of Helen, that spoke.

The Daindries could not know this, could not quite conceal their shrinking from him. It was not a question of right, it was a matter of taste. A too passionate devotion to an ideal was an untoward display, it was out of place: quite as would be a too naked display of devotion to a woman. This stern stiff man was at work perhaps wiping away an entailed incubus upon the life of man, but he lacked amenity. Their nerves told them this. Their minds hinted that he had intellect and courage. But like all proper people, what their nerves ordered came first.

David had liked his words. They excited him. He had understood them less than Mr. Daindrie or than Helen. But he had visioned more. What came in to him was precisely the personal anguish, the personal immolation—though he could not configure them beneath his antagonizing words. He saw also Helen's shrinking from the violence of those words: as if they laid hands on her, threatened to exclude all others and possess her. It seemed that Helen did not want to be possessed by truth. It must be something warmer, something smaller perhaps, that would possess her. So David felt the true content of Westerling's words. They held a burden of great courage, a plea of love: these he was really offering to her: these she would not accept.

David walked a few blocks to the car with Westerling. He held out his hand.

"I like what you said at dinner, oh—so much, Doctor!"

He wanted to say far more.

"Do you?"

Westerling looked sourly, haughtily at him, as if David were trying to hurt him. With a stiff body too erect he shook David's hand—dropped it with a gesture of completion.

"Good-night."

So David could not go on.

But he went to Cornelia, to whom he knew he could speak.

"I don't think," he said, "I am going back ever again to see Miss Daindrie."

Cornelia's heart stopped its beat. "*I am glad—I am—no, I can't be glad.*" Sense and will turmoiled against each other. David saw her sitting quiet there, looking at him. It was quite natural, he thought, that she could not understand. He had come to tell her. It came to him: "She must think it funny that I should tell her this. What can it matter to Cornelia?"

Cornelia, feeling he would go on and that for this he had come and that himself would tell her what to do, began to go deeper into his coming. He had sought her out: this was rare: for a rare incentive. He had sought her out because he needed to talk about Helen. To no one else could he talk. From no one else could he hope for the persuasion he wanted: to send him back to her. Here was a problem that hurt him. She could smoothe it. For this he had run to her. When she had done her part, he would leave her and go back to Helen, he would live and play once more. . . .

"What is it, Davie?" she asked aloud. She was ready for her part.

"I am not—not good enough for her, Cornelia."

Good enough to come to her when she could soothe him:



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not good enough for Helen. . . . "How do you know that, David?"

"Because I know some one who is. . . . Conrad Westerling is good enough for Helen. I admire him immensely. I know he loves her. I know it hurts him when I am there. I have seen that. Why should I hurt him, Cornelia?"

"But what about Helen Daindrie?"

"Why shouldn't she love him? He is strong, and courageous. He has wonderful ideas. His whole life—I feel that—is nothing but his ideas. She *should* love him."

"Is there room for Helen in one so full of ideas?"

"He loves her, so there must be."

"She does not love him, so perhaps there isn't."

Cornelia looked at him blushing.

"She does not love him, David. What is it to you? Can you make her love him, David, by staying away?"

David's blush was crimson.

"I—I don't mean that. N-no. I—I don't know what I mean."

He began pulling at his handkerchief with nervous fingers.

Cornelia steeled herself. . . *Yes she could!* She laughed at him.

"Why you funny person—you funny Quixotic David!" A pause. "Or are you merely awfully conceited? Answer me, then: how will your staying away help the lost cause of Doctor Westerling?"

David bit his lip, turned pale, looked at his twitching fingers.

"I am a fool, am I not, Cornelia?"

"You must go on, seeing Helen. Your staying away *now* would be offensive. What right have you to fight another man's battle against Helen? Don't you see how presumptuous it all is? She knows best what she wants, David darling, not only of Doctor Westerling, but of you also."



"Westerling is a noble man who has worked and done things."

"You will do things also. I won't let you slight yourself! That's slighting your friends. If you are good enough for me—and for Helen also?—" she found something near the playful smile she wanted, "must you not be good for something?"

"Cornelia, I don't understand her wanting ever to see me."

He was very mute and very timid, looking at his hands.

"And who are you to judge? What do you know of Doctor Westerling and of yourself? Live, David—spread out like a tree. Then we shall all know what you are."

David got up.

"There!" She came up to him close. She took his head in her two hands. "Are you convinced?" He shook his head and her hands moved with it. . . .

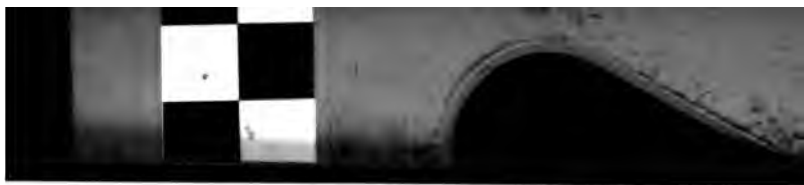
Since her plan had been found and she knew that it was working, there was peace in Cornelia. Her way with David was the way of a mother. She knew how this birth and this life had rended her: what it had cost her in blood and anguish. So is the mother peaceful, knowing this, with her unknowing child.

She took her toll of him, like a mother also. She held his cheeks with her hands and she drew him down and kissed him.

"And you see, don't you, why you can't stop so suddenly from going to see her? What would she think? The offense and the pain—yes, David, the pain, if you stayed away?"

He went back to Helen Daindrie. He went again and again. Cornelia had settled and given him what he desired. There was reason no longer for seeing Cornelia.

Spending his quiet evenings with Helen, he did not see the Doctor. He forgot him, he was ashamed, as Cornelia had cleverly made him, of the conceited presumption that he could help his cause by staying away. He came, therefore, feeling



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nothing but peace: wanting the right to feel no other thing. For in peace, he came to himself. And what he sought above all else was this. Coming to Helen and sitting there beside her, it was easier, somehow.

But it was easier most of all to look at Tom, and know he hated him, and know that they must part. . . .

They had gone on living together. The silence about them, holding them in, was stiff and frozen.

David went no longer to Flora's. He wandered about the City, seeing nothing, until his legs ached, and then he went to bed. He found that he needed more sleep than he had needed in years. There was a constant weighing soreness in his body. His head was heavy. His thoughts pushed through some clotted substance in his mind with a swerving pain. Often his eyes ached: often his food did not agree with him. Yet he was hungry. He needed great sleep, great food. After sleep, he was heavy, after food he was often sick with heartburn. He was like a pregnant woman. He went about loaded and diminished. His thoughts delineated no true objective world. What came with any sharpness into the mist of his mind, he hated. Thus Tom. What soothed his dwelling in these mists he courted. Thus Helen Daindrie.

His sleep also was strange. It was dreamless. When he closed his eyes he dropped, almost at once, into a profound close pit whose blackness held him moveless. When he woke, it was some force, far down where he had been, that had spewed him up: his brow aching and his body churned with a great dizzy distance.

He attended to work. There was always enough mental energy for that. In fact his work was his savior. It took him out of himself: but not upon some shattering objective world, shrunk and tortured and congested like that by which he had once measured himself and found that he was good. It took him out of himself into an easy world of

conventions and abstractions: where figures had the relief of ineluctable laws, where there were fixed commodities like tobacco and freight-rates, where men were sure machines of buying and selling, where values and credit could be determined. A sweet, imagined, malleable world, the world of Business, in which each day for a few hours, David took refuge. Another such world he now rediscovered and frequented. He had greatly neglected his violin. Always he had played without consistency, and now he did not play at all. It must have been painful and intrusive to make music of one's own, so David let the dust gather on his instrument and the strings break. It was different with the world of the music of others. David began to go to concerts: chiefly orchestral concerts. He did not care for the virtuosi, he detested Opera. The symphony of eighty upraised voices, marvelously artificial, essenced and controlled, swung him at once into a distant land. These worlds of the violins and horns and 'celli were also concise and constrained. Their ecstasy was a comfortable unit, as compared with the vast vagueness of a City street. In a way far more grandiose, music was a release, like business, for David.

With violent wrenching of his nerves, he forced himself to look at his dear friend. . . . This after all was Tom whom he had loved, who had found him at his advent into the life of the City and into life itself. This was that friend who had opened his mind, loosed his tongue, made him not too bitterly mourn his mother. This was Tom who, when he was ill, had nursed him and he had been so sure had loved him, whom now with straining nerves he tried to see, clear through a strange hot haze about them.

Tom sat there reading. No: he was not reading. His head was bowed over the book, but his eyes were away. He was very graceful, there in his rocking chair, with a leg thrown over the other knee and the gentle line of his sharp shoulders drooping down to his chin. Tom. His best friend! David

looked on him with a great love. What a clear clean face he had. David knew that the thinning hair so faint above his high square brow was soft like silk. That his eyes, if he saw them now, would be dim with a moisture he could not let be tears. And the old gnarled hands: the hands of one who struggled stintlessly and was master. What was there wrong in Tom? Sitting across the room they had once chosen with such joy together—"the Sun is there! Davie, think of that rare god, the Sun: he will visit us each morning and stay all day"—was it not hard for him to look on the years that intervened and that were somehow wrong? Why? Why was not life the simple thing it had appeared? They had gone singing a song together: it was not right that it should end in tears.

But now there was new strength in David; a new vantage point he seemed mystically to have gained, where he could clamber up and look about him. Often he had gone so far. Beating with regretful wings against a perverse reality that prisoned him no less. No less. Now, it was less indeed. If he came again to the conclusion at whose brink he had stood so often, now he could follow it. No bar between him and what he decided to do. If Tom was false and a false friend, he would step over the brink!

Gracefully Tom sat there. And it was sure in David that if ever he had loved, this was the loved one. There had been women whom he had embraced, close of kin who had housed him. This was a mere comrade, a mere fellow-man: his hand-clasp was strongest of all. But also there was life. How little he knew of life! What a sweet hedged delirium was music, what a close cabin his affairs downtown. Tom had taught him life. Life of a sort Tom gave him now, as had his mother. What if he must be born again, away, as once from her?

He had lived in a sweet dream. One walked along a road. At times, it was garlanded in fields: at times it rose between jagged heights, or dropped beside the spume and the roar of

waters. A road, clear and straight, and one could walk it. Here he had met Tom. They had joined hands. They would walk the road together. The steady road. The fleeting dream wherein he walked. . . . For here was no such road at all! How could one be sure of a hand clasped at one's side? Which were the fields and which the mountains and which the torrents? In their delirious tangle, where was the road?

Tom had poisoned him. Tom had lied to him. Tom led him into ugly places. Tom had a laughter that did not mean joy and tears that bespoke sorrow of a sort he could not give his heart to. A merry world. A horrible world! He needed to blot it out. It was so packed a frenzy of maze and quicksand, that, if he did not draw himself away, he must become a part of its frenzy—a mere whirling molecule in its tortuous falsehood.

Let Tom go his own way! Let him be!

David found what he was doing. There was his place of vantage to which he could swing, and there was he, clambering up to it. He was leaving Tom behind.

They had a talk.

Tom looked silently and long at David. He was very sweet and like the Tom David would never have left, in his silence. Then he said:

"David, I hope that whatever you do, you will not marry a good and beautiful woman."

He seemed very tired to David. The old fire was there, but it was moveless under a cloud that would not break.

David had no thought of marrying any one. No plan was farther from his consciousness. He smiled rather confidently, therefore. He was interested.

"Why?"

"Because, if you marry that sort, it will be almost impossible for you to break away."

"Why, Tom, if one married should one want to break away?"



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"Marriage has this, dreadful about it, David. It is life for a woman to be married, death for a man."

"How is that possible? If it is good for one—— What a discord you make of the world!"

Tom laughed. The fire parted the cloud.

"What is the world but just such unending discord? Look at the world. Is it a sweet harmonious place? The one harmony it knows is an infinite texture of just such deathless conflicts, of just such tragic sacrifice of individual lives to its cruel rhythms."

David was silent. Tom, the barer of life, was once more before him. He felt that Tom might well be true in his words. He had not altogether left the road of his Dream.

Tom went on. He had been silent and distant. He had made, for a long time, no advances to David. He had left him alone. Now in the silence of David, he saw his old art upon him, caught the flare of that past when he had taught and given and David had received. He had no power against this haunting past which he loved. He went forward to recapture it. Blindly he went like an insect toward a fire.

"David," he spoke with an incomprehensible passion that shriveled his face, "David, I would rather see you married to a whore—than to a woman who is beautiful and strong."

Already he was afraid, burned perhaps. He swerved away. ". . . Though it broke your heart, it would be less dangerous. You would escape. Comfort and happiness alone, you will be helpless against."

He stopped. He looked at David. He saw how different this was which had happened after his words, from what had always happened. David was calm. He was away. Tom had lost him. . . .

David went on with his visits to Helen Daindrie.

He found he was telling her all the little things that filled his days and nights—the little nothings.



"I don't know where I walked," he said. "It was very noisy, I know. But it all seemed so quiet. There was a silence in the men and women. . . . It seemed as if there was a silence in them, and they were scurrying about so fast to get away from it. . . . But the silence clung."

"You spend very little time at home."

"Yes," he said, shaking his head.

"Don't you care to read?"

"I don't seem to, now."

"Why, David?"

"I do not want to be at home. When I am home, I go to bed. Even if it is only nine o'clock."

And then there was a pause.

"You do not seem," she said, "to be very fond of the company of your friend."

He shook his head again, looked away. It was not needful, long. Again, he saw her.

He was very easeful and relaxed. He made no effort to talk or to conceal, when he was with her. She was a sweet impersonal presence. It was good of her to let him come so often. He had no sense within his vision of himself in the world, of her who was a woman beside him.

One time, after a great quiet, she said:

"Why, since these things are so, do you not live alone?"

Her words were part of the quiet. They did not break it. They were very calm and very quiet indeed. So they entered into David.

He had not answered her. Often he sat so, still, and when he spoke it was upon some other theme. She never spoke these words again. . . .

It was Spring. . . .

David got up very early from his bed, he went into their large room, it slumbered restlessly there, he looked out of the window.

A great mist was before his eyes. A great mist lay in the



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street. He could not see the street and the opposite houses. It was a great white mist, warm and rolling away: the mist of morning. He looked toward the east. There, dim in the white, were the trees of the little Square. Above them he saw the Sun, a gleam, swathed in the vapors.

He went back to bed and to sleep.

When he awoke, he was rested. He was very warm under his sheet; he had perspired. Under his flesh he was cool and rested as he had not been in a long time.

He returned to the large room and looked once more out of the window.

The Sun was a naked flame jewelng the sky. The trees of the little Park were shrill with green and the moisture sang on them like tinkling glass.

Tom came in. David said to him:

"Tom, I think I want to go away and live alone."

Tom was haggard in the sunlight. His eyes were hot and rimmed in shadows.

He nodded. "Of course, Davie," he said. "Go now, if you want to. I shall be glad to keep the place."

The two friends looked at each other. David wanted to take Tom's hand: he wanted to cry. Tom stood there, stiff, graceless for once, and did not help him. . . .

Thus easy it had come like leaves on the tree in Spring; like Sun out of the mists of dawn. David thought very little about it.

He went on going to see Helen. He took his trunk and his books and his violin and moved them into an ample furnished room on the West Side. He was to have a bathroom of his own. He would be comfortably fitted out.

On the last day, he held out his hand. He said:

"My trunk will be called for to-day, Tom. I have taken a room." He gave Tom the address which he had written on a piece of paper.





Tom took it between his thumb and finger. "Thank you, David." He had not looked at it.

Mrs. Lario came in, behind a large tray that held their breakfast. Quickly she set the table. She laid a newspaper, longitudinally folded, beside each plate. She left. Tom and David sat down to their last breakfast.

Usually, they read their papers. It helped to stem the arid draught of their silence. Now, they placed their papers unread away. Tom looked at David. He made no effort to speak. His temple was pulsing. David was trying to eat. He looked at his food. He leaned back in his chair, and also his thoughts seemed to incline away. He said to himself: "I must be natural. What am I doing?" He found that he could not eat his breakfast. He had a swallow of water, a spoonful of oatmeal. He could taste what he had eaten. It seemed to be still in his mouth. He raised his head and looked at Tom.

For an instant they saw each other.

A terror came upon David, a great pain. He could not bear this. Was this not his friend whom he was leaving? For whatever reason, to whatever end, this was Tom, and he loved him, and he was cutting an artery that throbbed with blood. He could not linger. He felt himself being swept toward a sort of precipice. He was afraid. It was as if he held in his hands some precious life, and he and it were being entranced toward the brink. Every vein in his head beat hard against his going: cried for his moving.

He got up. He was trembling. Tom smiled no longer. There was a passion in his eyes, as if this getting up of David were some fatal execution he had awaited and steeled himself to meet. His face was bloodless.

"Good-by, Tom," David put out his hand.

Tom took it. He held it limply. Then he pressed it hard. "Good-by, Boy," he said. . . .

Helen Daindrie had a friend, "my young friend" she called her with just a touch of condescension, a girl who had studied the violin abroad with the greatest masters and who was once more in New York. She was to make her official bow in the Fall. Helen Daindrie asked a few of her friends to come and hear her.

"I have invited Cornelia," she said to David. "Will you call for her and bring her?"

David had not seen Cornelia more than twice in the past three months. He had not seen her once of his own initiative. When she asked him to come, he obeyed. He always would. Despite himself, he had the feeling for her that a young man might have for a maiden aunt: he was deeply, even ideally fond of her, but she seemed to live in another world, there was no way of contact nor of expression for his fondness.

Since he was living alone, he had not seen her at all.

She greeted him, when he came, as usual, cordially, with no hint of the empty months without him. Her eyes no longer searched him with hot, comfortless inquiries. It was as if she had done everything she could to be acceptable to David. She was quite ready.

"Just a minute, while I throw on my cloak. It's very warm, isn't it? It isn't going to rain?"

"I don't think so. It's a glorious night."

"A glorious night? Do you think we have time to walk a little?"

He watched her finally settling her hair before the mirror. She was "dressed-up" in a slim white gown. She was ugly. Her head outweighed her body: it gave her a gaunt and naked look in her white dress. The yellow skin of her face broke the paltry shimmer of her gown into green and gray.

"I'm afraid," said David, "we might be late if we walked."

"Very well." She came up to him and smiled. "Come." She opened the door.

"Well, Davie, tell me how have you been?"



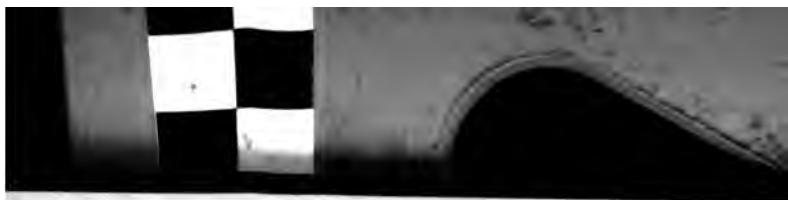
It was hard for him to speak. It was impossible for him to smile as he wished to. Cornelia seemed inadequate to his young hunger. He was angry at himself for this. He owed her better. He was not a very good and loyal friend, he supposed. Tom was right in what he said, however wrong in what he was. He walked beside Cornelia to the car, through the sweet May night: and in order to hold himself beside her and take her arm at the crossing, he needed to forget her. . . .

On the top floor of the house of the Daindries was a wide quiet room which Helen had fitted out for her own. Its easy spaces were conserved and rounded by the uncluttered furniture. Nothing was large and ponderous to defeat them. Two lamps stood wide away on little tables. Their low light brought out the warm dark stroke of the couch and absorbed the rugs. The gray walls had a retreating texture.

The guests sat very hushed and hidden in the shadows and the music. A tall girl swayed by the piano: she was raw-boned and gaunt above the light of the lamp. Her docked hair flung away from the sheer strong forehead. She played with a restraint that burned: it was her restraint that she flung circling and lowering from her sharp shoulders down upon the hidden guests.

The guests sat, suddenly tamed, suddenly cowed. They were the world to David—a motley mass made one by the dark and the music, that would rise up again and be a tearing thing against his life. Now they were breathing hard; something had shut them up in their own narrow breasts.

The girl stepped toward them, away from the piano. The piano was silent. He who had sat at it and followed her mood, who had trailed like a wake in a muffled sea upon her passage was now withdrawn. The girl stood like one naked above the room. The music she had played and the guests lay trammelled spirits at her feet. She moved and stepped upon



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them. She lifted her violin to play alone. It was Bach she was playing.

She was a sharp high figure cutting the dark room. Her violin was a hard creature that sobbed and was soft. She and her violin and the huddled life of the world within the room were the music that was Bach.

As she played she moved. She moved up and down: she was very free with her sweeping arm and her long legs walking as she played. From her freedom came an uttered Law and fell upon them all.

They were struck by the clear strokes of her playing and her walking up and down: they were showered in the fire of this molten music. . . .

David recaptured himself. He seemed to be sitting in a black pool of life. All of the lives of these about him were one: they were melted together. They had no being apart, they had no light. They were a black pool, stirless. Now he felt somewhere still a glow: under the black hush and above the strokes of the music. His senses went seeking a glow that he felt somewhere still.

He sat on a couch. Next him a woman: next her a man. The music flooded and beat and these had no life against it. They were a dim base on which the music dwelt. Still he knew that this glow he felt was real and was near. It was a presence to him. His eyes wandered to find it.

Against the music and himself and the room, his eyes went, seeking the magic more real than the music whereby he might come to life. They found!

She was sitting far back at the other end of the couch: she was lost in the black pool of the room as no one else, so that he could not see her. Yet David knew her, glowing alone, and knew what precious thing this was which he had found in the world. Once more, and as never before, it came to him, that he had never known her: that he had never seen her. She was hidden there with her true magic, in a false real world,



and he could not know her now, nor see her. But he knew that he wanted to know her, and that he wanted to see her.

He sat with a new quiet holding him tenderly. The girl played on. A passionate fantasy flooded forth from the round mouth of the violin. It rocked the room. It tore at these submerged ones living there and shredded them in its measured frenzy. But David was quiet and sure. The world was a mad wild place for this moment dominioned: the music lashing it was also wild and was sunless, it was a river buried under rocks of the earth and making them tremble. The glow he had found was a warm place where he would dwell.

The girl had stopped, she was leaning over her violin, she was packing it away.

The guests moved slow and uncertain, like the maimed creatures they were. Their voices were splinters of their broken selves.

They began to leave.

Cornelia stood near the door. She was looking for David. She saw him.

She saw that he did not want to escort her home. Very dimly his conscience was stirring in his mind. If she disappeared, his conscience would go also. It would leave no trace.

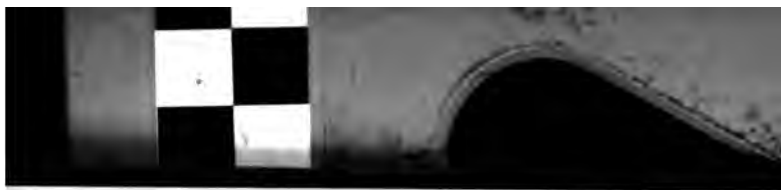
She was very shrunk and pitiful in the long swell of the music. She knew he must not see her another moment. His conscience might win and he might take her home: he would never forgive her. She saw a new world in his eyes, turning his eyes from hers.

She slipped out.

And all the guests were gone.

There was no one in the room save David and this Helen he did not know. She stood there, straight and small in the center of the room. She looked at him.

He came to her. Everything he did was slow. He had a sense of an eternity in which he was about to step. The pas-



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sions of his life seemed shivered fragments beside the steadfast vastness of this moment.

She was near him now. He had her warm pervasion all about him. He put his arms around her waist. Her arms were stiff at her side. As she leaned faintly back from the pressure of his hands, her face turned upward. So he drew her in, until her mouth was his. . . .

Cornelia was home. Straight she went into her little bedroom and lit the gas. She looked at herself in the mirror. Her face was pale, but a dim flush flowered her cheeks. Her eyes were wide and deep with a dry passion. She looked at herself; aloud she said:

"This is I. This is Cornelia Rennard." Her voice ceased, she went on speaking. "I am beautiful. For one time, I am beautiful. If he could see me now——" It was so. It was a pity he could not see her now.

She turned away, she took off her dress. Carefully she smoothed out its folds: she placed it away. She had a house-gown of warm quilted silk-brocade—it was brown. She put it on. She fastened it tight about her and made the belt sure about her waist with a knot.

She went to her desk and sat down.

She took a calendar date-book and laid it before her. There was an engagement inscribed for the following Sunday. The rest of the days were blank. She began to write.

"*Sunday*: prepare sketch for the Trenton fountain. Evening, Purzes for dinner. *Tuesday*: ask Mr. Bailey about Philadelphia. *Friday*: Jack and Clara to tea."

She filled ten days with her mental notes of engagements. When she had done so much, suddenly she grasped the book in her two hands as if to tear it. Her hands stopped in suspense. Her face turned upward.

"It has to be," she said, once more aloud. "It is a lie. . . . What is a lie?" She was smiling. "Cornelia——" she ten-

derly spoke, almost maternally to herself, "when one does a thing, do it well."

She laid the date-book open at the center of the desk.

With a swift thrust she opened the drawers. She closed them. No. There was nothing there to be concealed.

She was up. She smiled; once more she took a pencil and turned the pages of the book to a day two weeks away. She wrote:

"Ask David to dinner."

Then, she straightened and crossed the room.

A batch of painted sheets were in her arms. Her water-colors, her incomprehensible confessions. She laid them forth on the table, looked long at them. They were very lovely, these delirious designs, these flauntings of form and color. Color rose in them to form, form faded and died away to the realms of color. But she looked at them and shook her head. They meant nothing to her.

"What nonsense," she breathed.

Then: "Perhaps some of my statues may live. That first bronze——"

She swept the sketches back into her arms, she thrust them into the hearth. It was cold and black. In a moment it blazed. But the sheets burned slowly, imperfectly. The fire went out. She had to scatter them and work upon them and light them several times with many matches before they were ash.

At last it was done. Stubborn confessional!

She laughed at the daubed papers that had not wanted to die.

She turned out the light and went once more into the bedroom. She opened the window wide.

The balmy night swept over her head into the room. Street slumbered. Brutal lines of the street seemed broken into curves: its hard stillness rose now and swayed, fell murmuring beyond her eyes.

